









F. Hayman inv. et del.

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THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
SOPHOCLES,

From the GREEK;

By THOMAS FRANCKLIN, M. A.

Fellow of Trinity-College, and Greek Professor in the University of Cambridge.

V O L. I.

Nulla Sophocleo veniet jactura cothurno.



Æ Gemma in Museo Florentino.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED for R. FRANCKLIN, in Covent-Garden, 1759.

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T O H I S
R O Y A L H I G H N E S S
T H E
P R I N C E of W A L E S.

May it please your Royal Highness,

ANTIENT tragedy in it's pure and perfect state was made subservient only to the noblest purposes, and sacred to truth, religion and virtue. This species of the drama attain'd to it's highest degree of perfection in the time, and under the direction of the immortal Sophocles, the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his cotemporaries, and in a word, the Shakespear of antiquity.

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SUCH is the work, and such the author, which I have the honour to present to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. That a writer so universally applauded, should never yet have been seen in an English habit (for the disguises, which he has hitherto worn, are not worthy of that name) is certainly a matter of astonishment; but Sophocles seems purposely to have waited for the present happy opportunity of making his first appearance amongst us, under the patronage of your ROYAL HIGHNESS; a circumstance, which has made him ample retribution for all our former slight and neglect of him. The author of the following sheets, though conscious of his own inabilities, and the difficulty of the task which he has undertaken, approaches your ROYAL HIGHNESS with confidence, as satisfy'd that the same kindness and humanity, which induced your ROYAL HIGHNESS to accept these volumes, will also
pardon

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pardon their errors and imperfections ; and at the same time flatters himself that the rest of his readers will pay some deference to so illustrious an example.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS will pardon me, if, with my warmest acknowledgments on this occasion, I take the liberty to mingle my hearty congratulations on this day's solemnity : the world of letters, and the circle of arts and sciences, have a peculiar interest in every thing that concerns their patron and protector : permit me therefore in their name to wish your ROYAL HIGHNESS that health, happiness and prosperity, on which their own must in a great measure depend : permit me to wish that Britain under your ROYAL HIGHNESS's influence may become the darling seat of taste and genius, the throne of literature, and the constant residence of honour, freedom, piety

DEDICATION.

piety and virtue : this, may it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS, is the wish, this is the well-founded hope of all, and of none more truly, firmly, and sincerely, than

May it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

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June, 4th, 1759.

Thomas Francklin.

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E R R A T A.

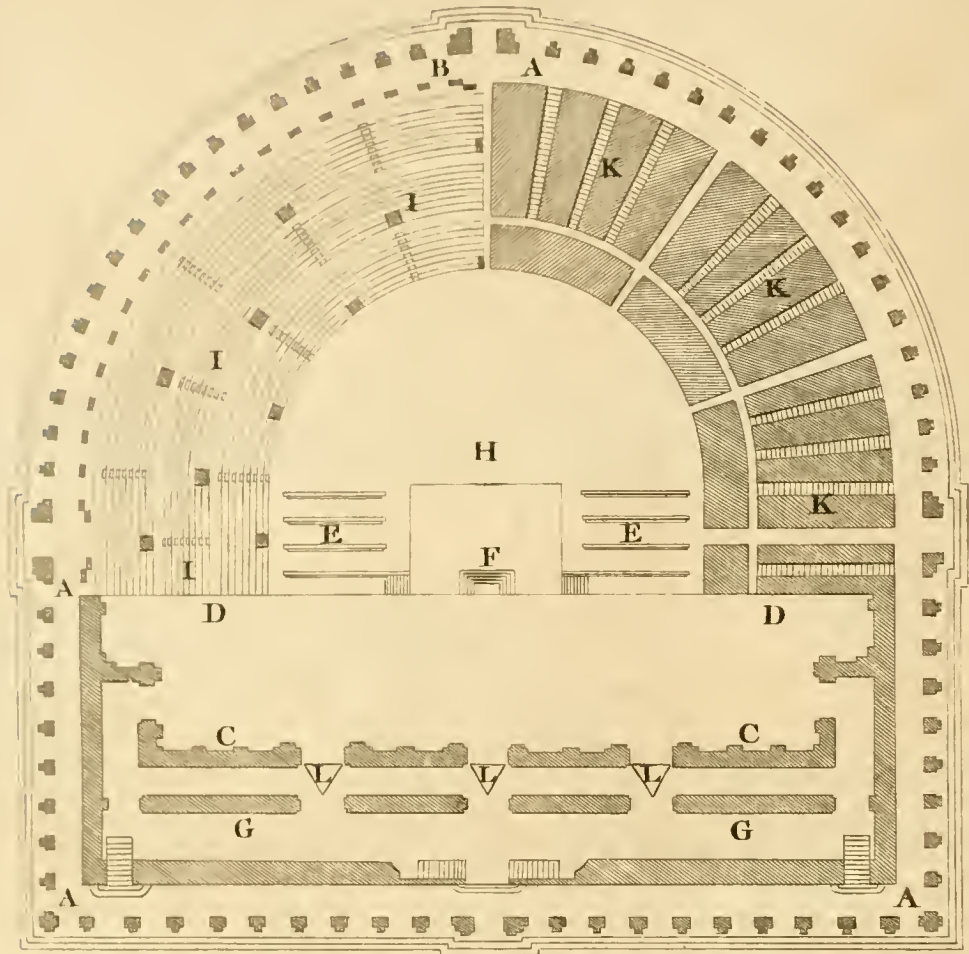
V O L. I.

PA G E 19, l. 11, for *inspired*, read *inspir'd*. p. 123, l. 1. after quick, omit the comma. p. 184, in the note, after therefore, for *was*, read *were*. p. 216, for p. 116 read 216.

V O L. II.

PA G E 24, l. 2, after *ears*, omit the comma. p. 106, in the note, for *πολροι*, read *πολοι*, and for *Eustatheus* read *Eustatbius*. p. 120, before l. 1, insert **D E I A N I R A.** p. 162, l. 1, for *darts* read *starts*. p. 203, l. 2, after *accurs'd* put a comma. p. 210, after *prophet* insert [Exeunt. p. 374, l. 3, for *seek* read *seeks*.

PLAN of a GREEK THEATRE .



- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| A . <i>Lower Portico.</i> | F . <i>The Thymele.</i> |
| B . <i>Upper or third Portico.</i> | G . <i>The Parascenium.</i> |
| C . <i>The Scenae.</i> | H . <i>The Orchestra.</i> |
| D . <i>The Proscenium.</i> | I . <i>The Seats.</i> |
| E . <i>The Hyposcenium.</i> | K . <i>The Stair-cases.</i> |
| L . <i>Triangular Machines for the Scenery.</i> | |

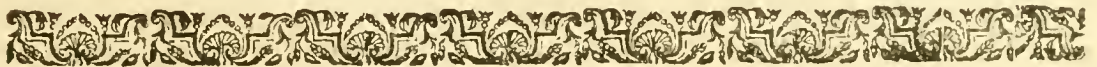


A

DISSERTATION

ON

ANTIENNT TRAGEDY.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DISSERTATION

BY

JOHN H. ...

WHILST the taste, genius, and knowledge of the ancients, have been universally felt and acknowledged in every other part of polite literature, it is matter of admiration to consider, that the Greek Theatre should so long have remain'd in neglect and obscurity. In philosophy, morals, oratory, and heroic poetry, in every art and science, we look back to Greece, as the standard and model of perfection: the ruins of Athens afford, even to this day, fresh pleasure and delight; and, nothing but her stage seems to be forgotten by us. Homer, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and many other eminent Greek writers, have of late years put on an English habit, and gain'd admission even into what is call'd polite company; whilst Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, still lurk in schools and colleges; and very seldom make their appearance, at least with dirty leaves, in the libraries of the great. To what shall we attribute a judgment so capricious and so unaccountable? partly, perhaps, to the hasty severity of ignorant foes, and partly, to the outrageous zeal of * mistaken friendship. The fate of Antient Tragedy hath, indeed, been singularly unfortunate: some painters have drawn a too flattering likeness of her; whilst others, have presented us with nothing but a caricature; some exalt the Greek drama, as the most perfect of all human compositions, without the least spot or blemish; whilst others affect to call it the infant state of the stage, weak, infirm and imperfect; and

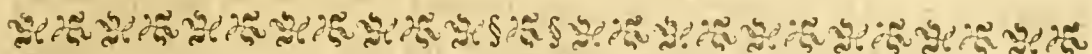
A 2

as

* The remarks, which are handed down to us on Antient Tragedy, have hitherto, for the most part, consisted of mere verbal criticisms, various readings, or general and trite exclamations of undistinguishing applause, made by dull and phlegmatic commentators, totally void of taste and judgment; add to this, that the old tragedians have been shamefully disguised and misrepresented to the unlearned, by the false medium of bad translations.

as such, treat it with the highest degree of negligence and contempt: exaggerated thus on the one hand by the extravagant encomiums of injudicious learning, and debased on the other by the rash censures of modern petulance, it's real and intrinsic merit hath never been thoroughly known, or candidly enquired into: the best method however in this, as in every other disputed point, is to set aside all prejudice and authority, and determine the cause by our own reason and judgment, from a fair, full, and impartial view of it.

THAT the spectator may be able to form a proper and complete idea of any object presented to him, it is necessary to place him in such a situation, as that his eye may at once comprehend the whole, and every part of it: for this purpose, I have collected and ranged in order a few materials, which, in the hands of some abler writer, may possibly lay the foundation for a complete history of the Antient Drama; in the mean time, the following sheets confine themselves to, and pretend to no more than, a brief account of the origin and progress of the Greek Tragedy; it's end and purport, the several parts, properties, and conduct of it; the construction, scenery, and decorations of the theatre; to which is added, a transient, but necessary view of the genius, character and situation, religion, morals and politics of the people, before whom it was represented; together with a short sketch of the lives and characters of the three great tragedians.



On the Origin of TRAGEDY.

NOTHING is more agreeable to the inquisitive mind, than to trace the gradual improvement of any art or science; to mark the causes of it's growth and culture, and pursue it through it's various stages of perfection: it is much to be lamented therefore, that neither Aristotle, nor any other writer on Antient Tragedy, hath given us an exact or regular account of it's progress and advancement from the time of it's birth to that of it's maturity and splendor; the few scatter'd anecdotes, which remain concerning it, rather serving to awaken our curiosity than to afford us any full and satisfactory information.

TRAGEDY was, in it's infancy, like every other production of human art, extremely weak, low, and contemptible: that wide and deep stream, which flows with such strength and rapidity through cultivated Greece, took it's rise from a small and inconsiderable fountain, which hides itself in the recesses of antiquity, and is almost buried in oblivion: the name alone remains to give us some light into it's original nature, and to inform us that Tragedy, like every other species of poetry, owed it's birth to religion.

TRAGEDY, or the § song of the goat, was only a sacred hymn: Bacchus, we are told, the first cultivator of vines, imparted his
secret

§ From *Τραγος*, a goat, and *ωδη*, a song. The commentators, not content with this most natural and obvious interpretation, have given us several others. Some of them turn *Τραγωδία* into *Τρυγωδία*, and so derive it from *Τρυξ*, the
lees

secret to a petty prince in Attica, named Icarius, who, happening one day to espy a goat, browsing on his plantations, immediately seized and offer'd him up as a sacrifice to his divine benefactor: the peasants assembled round their master, assisted in the ceremony, and express'd their joy and gratitude, in songs and dances on the occasion; the || sacrifice grew into a festival, and the festival into an annual solemnity, attended most probably every year with additional circumstances, when the countrymen flock'd together in crowds, and sung in rustic strains the praises of their favourite deity. The rural sacrifice became, in process of time, a solemn feast, and assumed all the pomp and splendor of a religious ceremony; poets were employed by the magistrate to compose hymns or songs for the occasion: such was the rudeness and simplicity of the age, that their bards contended for a prize, which, as § Horace intimates, was scarce worth

lees of wine, with which we are told the actors smear'd their faces: others inform us, that *Τετιχ* signifies, new wine, a skin of which was, it seems, usually given to the poet (like the butt of sack to our laureats) as a reward for his labours: but I shall not trouble my reader with the enumeration of their whimsical conjectures.

|| This story is told by Brumoy, and by twenty others, with little variation. It seems, notwithstanding, to carry with it the air of a fiction, so far as it regards Icarius, who seems only to have been introduced because Icaria was famous for vines, and (as Spon tells us in his voyage to Italy) was the first place where they sacrificed a goat to Bacchus, and also, where tragedies and comedies were first exhibited; but surely the song of the goat might be accounted for, without application to any particular person. Bacchus, being the acknowledged inventor and cultivator of the vine, it was most natural that the first planters should sacrifice to him the destroyers of it; the goat being a creature as remarkably fond of the leaves of the vine, as his sacrificer was of the juice of the grape; we shall find that he fell a victim not to Bacchus alone; and that the poet, as well as the god, came in for a share of him.

§ *Vilem certavit ob hircum.*

Art. Poet.

worth contending for ; being no more than a goat or skin of wine, which was given to the happy poet, who acquitted himself best in the task assign'd to him.

THIS was probably the period, when Thespis first pointed out the tragic path, by his introduction of a new personage, who relieved the Chorus or troop of singers, by reciting part of some well-known history or fable, which gave time for the Chorus to rest. All, that the actor ‡ repeated between the songs of the Chorus, was call'd an episode or additional part ; consisting often of different adventures, which had no connection with each other. Thus the Chorus, or song, which was at first the only, and afterwards the principal performance, became gradually and insensibly but an inconsiderable, though, as we shall see hereafter, a necessary and ornamental part of the drama.

FROM this time, we may imagine, the actor or reciter was more attended to than the Chorus ; however his part was executed, it had the powerful charms of novelty to recommend it, and quickly obscured the lustre of the Chorus, whose songs were now of a different nature, insomuch, that the original subject of them, the praise of Bacchus, was by degrees either slightly mention'd, or totally pass'd over and forgotten : the priests, who, we may suppose, for a long time presid'd over the whole, were alarm'd at so open a contempt of the deity, and unanimously exclaim'd, that all this § was nothing to Bacchus ; the complaint grew into a kind of proverbial saying, and as such is handed down to us.

FROM the origin of Tragedy, to the days of Thespis, and from his time to that of Æschylus, all is doubt, conjecture and obscurity ;

‡ When Tragedy assumed a regular form, these recitations which, during it's imperfect state, were only adventitious ornaments, became the principal and constituent parts of the drama, the subject of them, drawn from one and the same action, retaining their first name of episode.

§ εδεν προς Διονυσον.

security ; neither Aristotle, nor any other antient writer, give us the least insight into the state and progress of the Greek drama : if his treatise call'd || *Δισσκαλιζι* had reach'd posterity, it would probably have afforded us much pleasure and instruction : the names of a few, and but a few tragedians, during this dark period, are handed down to us : such were § Epigenes, the Sicyonian, and Pratinas, who wrote fifty plays, thirty-two of which are said to have been satyrical : after Thespis, came his scholar Phrynichus, who wrote nine tragedies, for † one of which we are told he was fined fifty drachmas, because he had made it (an odd reason) too deep, and too affecting : there was also another Phrynichus, author of ||| two tragedies ; to these we must add §§ Alcæus, Phormus, and ‡ Chœrilus ; together with Cephisodorus, an Athenian, who wrote the Amazons, and Apollophanes, supposed to have been the author of a tragedy, named Daulis ; though Suidas is of another opinion.

TRAGEDY, during the lives of these writers, had in all probability made but a slow progress, and received very little culture or improvement, when at length the great Æschylus arose, who from this rude and undigested chaos, created as it were a new world in the system of letters. Poets, and even epic poets there might perhaps have been before Homer ; dramatic writers there certainly were before Æschylus, the former notwithstanding we may with the utmost propriety stile the inventor and father of heroic

|| This treatise contain'd an exact account of the names, times, and authors of all the plays that were ever acted.

§ The Bacchæ, a tragedy of his, is cited by Athenæus.

† See Strabo, Herodotus and Plutarch.

||| Call'd, Andromeda and Erigoné.

§§ Mention'd by Macrobius and Pollux.

‡ Chœrilus is said to have written no less than a hundred and twenty tragedies.

heroic poetry, and the latter of the antient drama, which before his time doth not appear to have had any form, shape or beauty. He first introduced dialogue, that most essential part of tragedy, by the addition of a second personage, threw the whole fable into action, and restored the chorus to it's antient dignity.

ÆSCHYLUS, having like a tender parent endow'd his darling child with every mental accomplishment, seem'd resolv'd that no external ornaments should be wanting to render her universally amiable: he cloath'd her therefore in the most splendid habit, and bestow'd on her every thing that art could procure to heighthen and improve her charms. We know, from good authority, that fifty years before his time Thespis exhibited his rude performances in a cart, and besmear'd the faces of his actors with the lees of wine, probably to disguise their persons and give them the appearance of those whom they represented; but Æschylus, who as being himself author, actor, and manager, took upon him the whole conduct of the drama, did not neglect any part of it; he improved the scenery and decorations, brought his actors into a regular and well-constructed theatre, rais'd his heroes on the cothurnus or buskin, invented the masques, and introduced splendid † habits with long trains that gave an air of majesty and dignity to the performers.

FROM the time when tragedy began to assume a regular form, we find her closely following the steps of epic poetry; all the parts of the epopée, or heroic poem, may be traced in tragedy, though, as Aristotle observes, all the parts of tragedy are not to be found in the epopée; whence the partisans of the stage with

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some

† ——— personæ, pallæque repertor honestæ

Æschylus, & modicis instravit pulpita tignis,

Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno.

HOR.

some reason conclude, that perfection in the former is more difficult to be attain'd than in the latter. Without entering into this dispute, we may venture however to stile * Homer the source and fountain of the Antient drama; from him the tragedians drew the plan, construction, and conduct of their fables, and not unfrequently the fable itself; to him they applied for propriety of manners, character, sentiment and diction.

FROM this æra then, we are to consider tragedy as an elegant and noble structure, built according to the rules of art, symmetry and proportion; whose every part was in itself fair, firm and compact, and at the same time contributed to the beauty, usefulness and duration of the whole edifice. Sophocles and Euripides carefully studied the plan laid down by Æschylus, and by their superior genius and judgment improved it in a short time to it's highest state of perfection, from which it gradually declined to the introduction of the Roman drama.

* Homer, says Aristotle, was the first, who *μυμητικῆς δραματικῆς ἐποίησε*, 'invented dramatic imitations.' 'There was no more left for tragedy (says Lord Shaftsbury) than to erect a stage, and draw his dialogues and characters into scenes, turning in the same manner upon one principal action or event, with regard to place and time; which was suitable to a real spectacle.'

See Characterist. vol. II.

On the parts of Antient Tragedy.

AMONGST many other erroneous opinions concerning the Greek tragedy, adopted by modern editors and commentators, the unwarrantable division, which they have made of it into || acts, is perhaps the most remarkable, as there doth not seem to be the least ground or foundation for it: in the first place, neither Athenæus, nor any of the antient writers, who have given us quotations from the Greek plays, mention the act where the several passages are to be found; which they would most naturally have done, had any such division ever taken place. It may be likewise observed, that the word § Act does not once occur in that treatise of Aristotle, which gives us so exact a definition of every part of the Greek drama; add to this, that the tragedies themselves carry with them sufficient proof that no such thing was ever thought on by the authors of them; notwithstanding which, † Vossius, Barnes, and several other editors have discover'd an office of the chorus, which the poet never assign'd them, namely, their use in dividing the acts, the intervals of which were supplied

B 2

|| See a dissertation on this subject, by Mons. Vetry, in the hist. de l'acad. vol. 8, p. 188.

§ The word *δραμα*, which we translate an act signifies the whole performance, or drama, and could not possibly therefore mean any one particular part of it.

† Chorus, says Vossius, *pars fabulæ post actum, vel inter actum & actum*. See inst. poet. l. 2.

plied by their songs; though it is evident that the business of the chorus (as will sufficiently appear in the following account of it) was, on the other hand, to prevent any such unnatural pause or vacancy in the drama, as the division into acts must necessarily produce; besides that, if we take the word act in that sense, which the modern use of it demands, we shall find it in the Greek tragedies composed sometimes of a single scene, and sometimes of half a dozen; and || if the songs or intermedes of the chorus are to determine the number of acts, the play will consist not always of five, according to our own custom, but at one time of only three, and at another of seven or eight. § Horace has indeed told us, that there should be but five acts; but it does not from thence follow that it always was so: the truth after all is, that this mistake, as well as many others, arose from an error common to almost the whole race of writers and critics on antient tragedy, who have unanimously agreed to confound the Greek and Roman drama, concluding them both to be govern'd by the same laws, though they are in many parts essentially different: they never allow for the time between Aristotle and Horace, but leap from one to the other with the utmost agility:

|| On looking into the chorusses of Sophocles as they stand in the original, we find that the Ajax, besides the χορμμοι (which will be explain'd hereafter) has five, which are thus unequally divided; to the first act two; the second one; the third one; the fourth one; the fifth none at all: the Trachiniæ has six; the Electra but three; and the Philoctetes but one regular song or intermede in the whole play. If it be granted therefore, as I think it is on all hands, that wherever we meet with strophe and antistrophe, and there only we are to conceive that the chorus sung, nothing can be more absurd than to make those songs dividers of the acts, when it is evident that the chorus sung only as occasion offer'd, and the circumstances of the drama required, which accounts for the irregularity and difference in the numbers of them. If the reader will take the trouble to examine the antient tragedies, he will find what I have said confirm'd in every one of them.

§ Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu.

agility : it is plain however, from ‡ the reasons here mention'd, that the antient Greek tragedy was one continued representation from beginning to end.

THE division into acts therefore is undoubtedly a piece of modern refinement ; which, as much may be said on both sides, I shall not stop either to condemn or approve, but proceed to the only division, which the antients ever made ; a division, which nature points out to this and every other composition, viz. a § beginning, a middle, and an end ; or, in the words of Aristotle, the prologue, the episode, and the exode.

THE PROLOGUE of antient tragedy, was not unlike the *πρόαυλιον* or overture in music, or the proœmium in oratory, containing all that part of the drama, which ‡ preceded the first song, or intermede of the chorus.

WHAT

‡ Many other reasons equally forcible might be alledged, some of which the reader will find scatter'd about in the notes to my Translation of Sophocles. I shall only observe here, that the old editions of the Greek tragedies, so far from dividing them into acts, do not so much as make the least separation of the scenes ; even the names of the persons are not always properly affix'd to the speeches ; no notice is taken of the entrances and exits of the actors ; the asides are never mark'd, nor any of the gestures or actions, which frequently occur, pointed out to us in the margin ; defects which, however inconsiderable, may mislead the young and injudicious reader, and which ought therefore to be carefully supplied by the critic or translator.

§ The cause and design of undertaking any action are the beginning ; the effects of those causes and the difficulties we find in the execution of that design are the middle ; the unravelling and resolving those difficulties are the end.

See Bossu's treatise on epic poetry.

‡ Aristotle must certainly be understood to mean not the first entrance, but the first song or intermede of the chorus ; because, as Dacier and other writers have observed, there are tragedies (as the *Perfæ* and *Suppliants* of *Æschylus*) where the chorus enters first on the stage and opens the play ; to such therefore, if Aristotle meant the speaking and not the song, there would be no prologue ; a contradiction, which is avoided by understanding what is here said of the *παροδος*, or first song, which never begins till the prologue is over, and matter furnish'd to the chorus for the intermede.

WHAT Aristotle calls the prologue should contain, according to the ancient critics, all those circumstances, which are necessary to be known for the better understanding and comprehension of the whole drama, as, the place of the scene, the time when the action commences, the names and characters of the persons concern'd, together with such an insight into the plot as might awaken the curiosity of the spectator without letting him too far into the design and conduct of it. This, however easy it may seem at first view, is so difficult, that it has scarce ever been perform'd to any degree of perfection. Of the Greek tragedians, Sophocles alone seems to have succeeded in this particular, the prologues of * Æschylus being quite rude and inartificial, and those of Euripides for the most part tedious and confused.

THE EPISODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is between the songs or intermedes of the chorus: this answers to our second, third, and fourth act, and comprehends all the intrigue or plot to the unravelling or catastrophe, which in the ‡
best

* According to this rule, the prologues of Æschylus and Euripides will by no means stand the test of examination; that part of the tragedy, which precedes the first song of the chorus being often employ'd, by those writers, either in absurd addresses to the spectators, or in the relation of things extremely foreign to the purpose of the drama, frequently anticipating the incidents and circumstances of the play, and even sometimes acquainting the audience beforehand with the catastrophe; all of them capital errors, which the superior judgment of Sophocles taught him carefully to avoid.

‡ Sophocles, who was certainly the most correct of the three great tragedians, has, I think, observed this rule in all his plays but two, viz. Ajax and OEdipus Tyrannus; for, if the death of Ajax is the catastrophe of that tragedy, it is over long before the last song of the chorus; if the leave granted to bury him be the catastrophe, as some critics contend, the Episode is confined within its proper limits: but this cannot be allow'd without attributing to this piece what is a still greater blemish, a duplicity of action; a dramatic crime, of which Sophocles in that play I am afraid cannot easily be acquitted.

In

best antient writers is not made till after the last song of the chorus; the conduct and disposition of the Episode may be consider'd as the surest test of the poet's abilities, as it generally determines the merit, and decides the fate of the drama. Here all the art of the writer is necessary to stop the otherwise too rapid progress of his fable, by the intervention of some § new circumstance that involves the persons concern'd in fresh difficulties, awakens the attention of the spectators, and leads them as it were insensibly to the most natural conclusion and unravelling of the whole.

THE EXODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is recited after the chorus has left off singing; it answers to our fifth act, and contains the unravelling, or catastrophe of the piece; after which, it is remark'd by the critics, any song of the chorus would only be tedious and unnecessary, because what is said, when the action is finish'd, cannot be too short.

In the OEdipus Tyrannus it is observable, that the total discovery of OEdipus's guilt is made before the last song of the chorus, and becomes the subject of the intermede.

§ Brumoy compares the fable of a good tragedy to a large and beautiful temple, which the skill of the architect hath so contrived as to make it appear at first view of much less extent than it really is, wherein the farther you advance, the more you are surpris'd at the vast intervening space, which the extraordinary symmetry and proportion of it's parts had conceal'd from the eye.

On the CHORUS.

WE come now to an essential † part of antient tragedy peculiar to itself: whilst every other member of the building is universally admired, and industriously copied by modern architects, this alone hath been rejected and contemn'd as ungraceful and unnecessary. The chorus, as I before observed, gave the first hint to the formation of tragedy, and was as it were the corner-stone of the whole edifice: as a religious ceremony it was consider'd by the multitude with a kind of superstitious veneration; it is not therefore improbable that the first authors of the regular drama willingly gave way to popular prejudices, and for this, among many other reasons, incorporated it into the body of the tragedy: accordingly, we find the chorus of Æschylus resuming it's original office, reciting the praises of the local deities, demi-gods and heroes, taking the part of distress'd virtue, and abounding throughout in all those moral precepts, and religious sentiments, by which the writings of the antients are so eminently and so honourably distinguish'd.

VARIOUS are the arguments that have from time to time been produced by the zealous partizans of antiquity, in favour of the tragic chorus, the principal of which I shall briefly recapitulate and lay before my readers, begging leave at the same time to premise, that whether a chorus is defensible with regard to the antient theatre, and whether it should be adopted by the modern, are two very different questions, though generally blended and

† Aristotle ranks the chorus amongst what he calls parts of quantity, and places it after the Exode.

and confus'd by writers on this subject ; the former may perhaps be easily proved, though the latter be left totally undetermined. The antients thought it highly improbable that any great, interesting and important action should be perform'd without witnesses ; their chorusses were therefore compos'd of * such persons as most naturally might be supposed present on the occasion ; § persons, whose situation might so far interest them in the events of the fable, as to render their presence useful and necessary ; and yet not so deeply concern'd as to make them incapable of performing that office, to which they were more particularly appointed, the giving proper advice, and making proper reflections on every thing that occur'd, in the course of the drama ; for this purpose, a choriphæus or leader superintended and directed all the rest, spok for the whole body in the dialogue part, and led the songs and dances in the intermede. By the introduction of a chorus, which bore a part in the action, the antients avoided the absurdity of monologues and soliloquies, an error,

C

which

* ‘ A chorus, interposing and bearing a part in the progress of the action, gives the representation that probability and striking resemblance of real life, which every man of sense perceives and feels the want of, upon our stage ; a want, which nothing but such an expedient as the chorus can possibly relieve.’

This is the remark of one of the most ingenious and judicious critics, which our own age or perhaps any other ever produced : the reader will find it, with many others equally just, p. 118 of the first volume of a commentary and notes on Horace's Art of Poetry, and Epistle to Augustus.

§ Thus, in the Ajax of Sophocles, the chorus is compos'd of the men of Salamis, his countrymen, and companions ; in the Electra, of the principal ladies of Myceræ, her friends and attendants ; in the Philoctetes, of the companions of Ulyssès and Neoptolemus, the only persons, who could with any propriety be introduced. The rest of this writer's plays, and his only, will stand the test of examination by the rule here mention'd.

which the moderns have imperceptibly and necessarily fallen into, from their omission of it: they avoided also that miserable resource of distress'd poets, the insipid and uninteresting race of confidentes (a refinement, for which we were indebted to the French theatre) who only appear to ask a foolish question, listen to the secrets of their superiors, and laugh or cry as they are commanded.

BUT the great use and advantage of the chorus will best appear, when we come to consider it in it's moral capacity. In that illustrious period, which may be call'd the golden age of tragedy, the stage was not only the principal, but almost the only vehicle of instruction. Philosophy applied to the liberal arts for their influence and assistance; she appear'd in the theatre even before she dictated in the academy, and Socrates is supposed to have deliver'd many of his excellent precepts, by the mouth of his † favourite poet: this sufficiently accounts for the sententious and didactic part of the antient drama; for all that profusion of moral and religious sentiments, which tires the patience and disgusts the delicacy of modern readers: the critics of those times were of opinion (however they may differ from our own in this particular) that the first and principal characters of the piece were too deeply interested in their own concerns, and too busy in the prosecution of their several designs and purposes, to be at leisure to make moral or political reflections: such, therefore, they very judiciously for the most part put into the mouth of the chorus; this,

† Hence Euripides was call'd 'ο επι της σκηνης φιλοσοφος' 'the philosopher of the theatre,' 'in iis (says Quintilian) quæ a sapientibus tradita sunt, ipsis pæne par.' With regard to Socrates, his friendship with this poet is universally known, 'εδοκει σωματοποιειν Ευριπιδην,' says Diogenes Laertius. The comic poets of that time did not scruple to ascribe several of Euripides's plays to Socrates, as they afterwards did those of Terence to Lælius and Scipio.

this, at the same time, || prevented the illiterate, and undistinguishing part of the audience, from mistaking the characters, or drawing hasty and false conclusions from the incidents and circumstances of the drama : the poet by this means leading them as it were insensibly into such sentiments and affections as he had intended to excite, and a conviction of those moral and religious truths, which he meant to inculcate.

BUT the chorus had likewise another ‡ office, which was, to relieve the spectator, during the pauses and intervals of the action, by an ode or song adapted to the occasion, naturally arising from the incidents, and * connected with the subject of the drama :

C 2

here

|| Euripides being obliged to put some bold and impious sentiments into the mouth of a wicked character, the audience were angry with the poet, and look'd upon him as the real villain, whom his actor represented : the story is told by Seneca. ' Now if such an audience (says the ingenious writer, whom I quoted above) could so easily misinterpret an attention to the truth of character into the real doctrine of the poet, and this too, when a chorus was at hand to correct and disabuse their judgments, what must be the case when the whole is left to the sagacity and penetration of the people ?'

‡ The office of the chorus is divided by Aristotle into three parts, which he calls *παρῳδός*, *στάσιμον*, and *κομμοί*; the *παρῳδός* is the first song of the chorus; the *στάσιμον* is all that which the chorus sings after it has taken possession of the stage, and is incorporated into the action; and the *κομμοί* are those lamentations so frequent in the Greek writers, which the chorus and the actors make together. See the second scene of the second act of *Ajax*, in my translation; *Philoctetes*, act one, scene three; the beginning of the *OEdipus Coloneus*, together with many other parts of Sophocles's tragedies, where the *κομμοί* are easily distinguishable from the regular songs of the chorus.

* ——— *Neu quid medios intercinat actus*

Quod non proposito conducatur hæreat apte.

HOR.

This connection with the subject of the drama, so essentially necessary to a good chorus, is not always to be found in the tragedies of Æschylus and Euripides, the latter of which is greatly blamed by Aristotle for his carelessness in this important particular; the correct Sophocles alone hath strictly observed it.

here the author generally gave a loose to his imagination, display'd his poetical abilities, and sometimes, perhaps too often, wander'd from the scene of action into the regions of fancy; the audience notwithstanding were pleas'd with this short relaxation, and agreeable variety; sooth'd by the power of numbers and the excellency of the composition, they easily forgave the writer, and return'd as it were with double attention to his prosecution of the main subject: to this part of the antient chorus we are indebted for some of the noblest flights of poetry, as well as the finest sentiments that adorn the writing of the Greek tragedians. The number of persons composing the chorus was probably at first indeterminate, varying according to the circumstances and plot of the drama. Æschylus, we are told, brought no less than fifty into his || *Eumenides*, but was obliged to reduce them to twelve; Sophocles was afterwards permitted to add three; a limitation, which we have reason to imagine became a rule to succeeding poets.

WHEN the chorus consisted of fifteen, the persons composing it ranged themselves in three rows of five each, or five rows of three; and in this order advanced or retreated from the right hand to the left, which is call'd § *strophe*, and then back from the

|| In the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, the chorus consisted of fifty furies, whose habits, gesture, and whole appearance was by the art of the poet render'd so formidable as to frighten the whole audience; an accident, which so alarm'd the public, that a decree was immediately issued to limit the number of the chorus.

§ It does not appear that the old tragedians confin'd themselves to any strict rules, with regard to the division of *strophe*, *antistrophe* and *epode*, as we find the choral songs consisting sometimes of a *strophe* only, sometimes of *strophe* and *antistrophe*, without the *epode*; the observing reader will find many other irregularities of this kind in a perusal of the Greek tragedies.

the left to the right, which we call antistrophe ; after which they stood still in the midst of the stage, and sung the epode. || Some writers attribute the original of these evolutions to a mysterious imitation of the motion of the heavens, stars, and planets, but the conjecture seems rather whimsical. The dance, we may imagine, (if so we may venture to call it) was slow and solemn, or quick and lively, according to the words, sentiments, and occasion ; and, in so spacious a theatre as that of Athens, might admit of such grace and variety in it's motions as would render it extremely agreeable to the spectators : the petulancy of modern criticism has frequently made bold to ridicule the use of song and dance in antient tragedy, not considering (as Brumoy observes) that dancing is, in reality, only a more graceful way of moving, and music but a more agreeable manner of expression ; nor, indeed, can any good reason be assign'd why they should not be admitted, if properly introduced and carefully managed, into the most serious compositions. To say the truth, nothing is more astonishing than the prejudices we entertain, and the partiality we shew, with regard to our own modes and customs : we condemn the chorusses of the antients, which supplied with decency and propriety the vacant parts of the drama ; and how do we fill up our own ? To be convinced of our injustice and absurdity, let us suppose Sophocles, or Euripides, transported from the shades of elysium, and entering one of our noisy theatres, between the acts ; the audience engaged in bowing or talking to each other, and the music entertaining them

|| ' Le Chœur (says Brumoy) alloit de droite à gauche, pour exprimer le cours journalier du firmament d'orient en occident, ce tour s'appelloit strophe ; il declinoit ensuite de gauche à droite, par égard aux planettes, qui outre le mouvement commun ont encore le leur particulier d'occident vers l'orient, c'étoit l'antistrophe, ou le retour ; enfin le chœur s'arretoit au milieu du théâtre pour y chanter un morceau qu'on nommoit epode, & pour marquer par cette situation la stabilité de la terre.'

them with a jig of Vivaldi, or the roast beef of old England, how would they be surpris'd in a few minutes to find that all this disorder, riot, and confusion, was in the midst of a most pathetic and interesting tragedy, and that the warmest passions of the human heart were broken in upon and enfeebled by this strange and unnatural interruption !

THE chorus continued on the stage during the whole representation of the piece, unless when some very † extraordinary circumstance required their absence ; this obliged the poet to a continuity of action, as the chorus could not have any excuse for remaining on the spot, when the affair, which call'd them together, was at an end ; it preserv'd also the unity of time ; for if the poet, as * Hedelin observes, had comprehended in his play a week, a month, or a year, how could the spectators be made to believe that the people, who were before them, could have pass'd so long a time without eating, drinking, or sleeping ? Thus we find that the chorus preserv'd all the unities of action, time, and place ; that it prepar'd the incidents, and inculcated the moral of the piece ; reliev'd and amus'd the spectators, presid'd over and directed the music, made a part of the decoration, and in short pervad'd and animat'd the whole ; it render'd the poem more regular, more probable, more pathetic, more noble and magnificent ; it was indeed the great chain, which held together
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† As in the Ajax of Sophocles, where the chorus leave the stage in search of that hero, and by that means give him an opportunity of killing himself in the very spot, which they had quitted, and which could not have been done with any propriety whilst they were present, and able to prevent it : on these occasions, the chorus frequently divid'd itself into two parts, or semichorusses, and sung alternately.

* See his whole art of the stage, page 129, of the English translation.

and strengthen'd the several parts of the drama, which without it could only have exhibited a lifeless and uninteresting scene of irregularity, darkness and confusion.

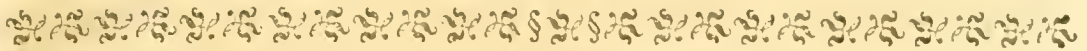
THE antient chorus notwithstanding, with all it's advantages, is not agreeable to every taste ; it hath been attack'd with great severity, and treated with the utmost contempt ; it hath been call'd arrant pedantry, an excrescency of the drama, a mob of confidants ; even writers of approved genius and judgment have said, that it is absurd to imagine the antients would ever have trusted their secrets, especially those of a criminal nature, to all their domestics ; that it is impossible to imagine that fifty, or even fifteen people can keep a secret, fifteen people of the same mind, thought, voice, and expression.

IT must be acknowledged, that these critics have selected that part of the office of the chorus, which is most liable to censure ; but even if we allow the objection it's full force, it will not suffice to condemn the chorus itself, which in the judicious Sophocles, who avoided the errors and absurdities of his cotemporaries, is unexceptionable : in that noble author, nothing is entrusted to the chorus, which ought to be conceal'd ; nor any thing conceal'd, which ought to be imparted to them ; we might therefore perhaps, with equal justice, banish from our own stage, the general practice of soliloquies, because Shakespear hath frequently drawn them out to an immoderate length, as utterly condemn the whole antient chorus, because Euripides hath in two or three of his plays, made an improper use of it.

' Who shall decide, when doctors disagree ?'

SOME applaud the chorus with a kind of enthusiastic rapture, whilst others endeavour to sink it into universal contempt: for my own part, I cannot but think it absolutely necessary on the antient stage, and that it might be render'd useful and ornamental, even on our own.

I am notwithstanding far from being of opinion, that it should be admitted constantly and indiscriminately into the modern theatre; the use of it must depend entirely on the subject: certain it is, that there are many in our own history, as well as in that of other nations, where a chorus might be introduced with the utmost propriety; but if, after all, fashion and prejudice will not suffer them to appear on the stage, they may at least gain admission to the closet; thither let the reader of true taste and judgment, carry *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, written on the antient model, and compare them with many of those tinsel flimsy performances that have lately assumed the name of tragedies, which have owed all their success to the false taste of the age, join'd to the real merit of the actors in the representation of them.



On the Verse, Recitation, and Music of Antient Tragedy.

THE art of poetry was consider'd by the antients as a part of that general system, which they term'd the *μελοποιια*, or melody, and was in reality the art of making verses proper to be sung: they look'd upon words, not only as signs of particular ideas, but as sounds also, enabled by the assistance of music to express all the passions of the human mind. When in the descriptive parts of the drama a dreadful or disagreeable object was to be represented, the words were form'd of such harsh and jarring syllables, as by grating on the ear might best impress the exactest representation of it; and in like manner, when the grand, the beautiful, or the tender was to be set before the eyes of the spectator, the language was carefully and even painfully adapted to it. The Greeks, who were extremely solicitous to cultivate and improve their language to the highest degree of perfection, took more than ordinary care in the formation of their verse; the quantity of every syllable was carefully ascertain'd, different words, different dialects, and different feet, were appropriated to different species of poetry; and none infringed on the rights and privileges of another: Tragedy indeed, as the sovereign, assumed a kind of peculiar title to them all; every species of verse was occasionally introduced to adorn and beautify the drama. The iambic was generally made use of in the body of the piece, as approaching, according to the judgment of Aristotle, nearest to common discourse, and therefore most naturally adapted

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to the dialogue; this rule however is not constantly and invariably observed, but sometimes departed from with judgment; the metre is frequently changed, not only in the songs of the chorus, but in other places, and that generally in the most interesting and impassion'd parts of the drama, where, it may here be observed, it is most probable that the music and instruments accompanying the verse were changed also; a happy circumstance for the poet, as it must have afforded an agreeable relief to the audience, who would naturally be fatigued by the repetition of the same sounds, be they ever so harmonious. || If our own times, manners, and taste, would admit of such variations, what additional beauties would they reflect on the British theatre! but such a change of metre in serious dramatic performances is render'd absolutely impossible, as well from many other obstacles, as from the ‡ poverty of our language, when put in comparison with those of antiquity; particularly that of Greece, whose superiority over us in this respect is so remarkably visible. On the
antient

|| Since the expulsion of tragedies in rhyme, of all things doubtless the most absurd, some of our best poets have introduced what is call'd a tag, consisting of three or four couplets, at the end of every act, to relieve the ear from the monotony of blank verse; but even this is now exploded, and we are confined to the repetition of the same continued metre, from beginning to end.

‡ ' It must be confess'd (says a very judicious writer) that all the modern
' languages fall infinitely short of the antients in this point; both the Greek
' and Latin tongues assign'd for the pronounciation of each syllable an exact
' measure of time, in some longer, in some shorter, and so variously intermix'd
' those two different measures in the same word, as furnish'd means for that
' variety of versification, to which we are altogether strangers.' See a book
entituled, Observations on Poetry, printed for Doddsley in 1738, p. 108, in
the chapter on versification; where the reader will meet with many sensible
remarks on this subject.

antient stage, the length or shortness of every syllable was as it were fix'd and determin'd, either by nature or by use; hence the song had a necessary and agreeable conformity with common discourse, which render'd it more intelligible: our * musicians, in the composition of their songs, make short syllables long, and long short, as it suits the air, or recitative; and whilst the-music pleases the ear, the words frequently offend it: if the poet and musician were always united in one person, which very seldom happens, this inconvenience might, with all the disadvantages of our language, be in a great measure lessen'd, if not entirely removed.

It is more than probable, and nearly demonstrable, that the theatrical declamation of the antients was compos'd and wrote in notes, and that the whole play, from beginning to end, (except the commoi and chorusses) were in a kind of § recitative like our modern operas; that it was || accompanied with music
 D 2 throughout

* ‘ Our different cadences, (says the elegant author of *Elfrida*) our divisions, variations, repetitions, without which modern music cannot subsist, are entirely improper for the expression of poetry, and were scarce known to the antients.’

§ It is the opinion of P. Menestrier, and several other learned men, that the custom of chanting in churches was originally taken from the ancient stage: as the theatres were open at the commencement of the christian æra, it is not improbable, but that the common people might recite our Saviour's passion after the manner of the tragedians; certain however it is, that in our own nation, as well as in many others, the first tragedies exhibited were on religious subjects, and in some places continue so even to this day.

|| The *μελοποιια*, or melody, is mention'd by Aristotle, as one of the six essential parts of tragedy, and consequently must have been consider'd by him not as confin'd to the chorus, but diffusing itself through the whole drama.
 In

throughout, and that the reciter had little else to do, than carefully to observe the directions of the poet; the quantity of every word was ascertain'd, the time, duration, and rhythmus of every syllable fix'd by the musician, so that he could not easily mistake or offend; the actor was not, as on our stage, left at liberty to murder fine sentiment and language, by wrong accents and false pronunciation; by hurrying over some parts with precipitancy, and drawling out others into a tedious monotony; a good voice and a tolerable ear were all that the poet required of him.

MUSIC is rank'd by Aristotle amongst the essential parts of tragedy; nor is there the least reason to doubt but that it was consider'd by the antients both as useful and ornamental: it was most probably diffused throughout the whole piece, accompanying the recitation in the dialogue, directing the voice, and even perhaps the § action and gesture of the performers; varying it's movements according to the different passions to be excited in the breasts of the audience; it's different measures were always carefully † adapted to the metre, and took their names
from

In the 19th chapter of his problems, he asks why the tragic chorusses never sing in the hypodorian, or hypophrygian mood, which are both employ'd in the scenes; from which passage, as well as many others that might be quoted, it is evident that they sung both in the scenes, or dialogue part, and in the chorus also.

§ In the third volume of L'Abbé du Bos's critical reflections on poetry, painting, and music; the whole eleventh chapter is employ'd in proving, or rather endeavouring to prove, that amongst the Romans the theatrical declamation was divided between two actors, one of whom pronounced, whilst the other executed the gesticulation—I refer my readers to the book itself, where they will find many ingenious remarks on the theatrical representations of the antients.

† St. Austin has written a treatise, expressly to reconcile the various measures of antient verse with the principles of music.

from the different feet made use of in the verse, as the dactylic, the ionic, pæonic, and the rest; the principal exertion of it's powers must, we may imagine, have been reserved for the songs, or intermedes of the chorus, where both the poetry and music admitted of much greater freedom and variety than in the other parts of the drama: thus we see, in the Antient Theatre, music always accompanied her sister science, assisted, animated, and supported her, was in short, in all respects, her friend and fellow-labourer,

Qualem decet esse forem.

The office of a dramatic poet, in the time of antient tragedy, required, we may observe, a wider circle of knowledge, and far more extensive abilities, than the present age demands, or expects from him: for, besides all the other requisites, it was necessary that he should be master of every kind of verse, completely skill'd in music, and able to direct all the evolutions, movements, or (if so we chuse to call them) the dances of the chorus; Euripides, we are told, instructed his fingers in the grave and solemn airs, which accompanied all his pieces; and Plutarch informs us, that the people of Susæ, and the Persians, by the command of Alexander, sung the tragedies of Sophocles, and his successors in the drama, according to the measures, which those writers had themselves prescribed at the first representation of them.

TRAGEDY was in it's infancy, what Aristotle calls it, † made up of music and dancing; and the old tragedians, Thespis, Pratinas, Cratinus, and Phrynicus, according to Athenæus, bore the name of * dancers, because they used so much dancing in their chorusses! Tetrameters were therefore for a long time made use of

in

† Ορχηστικωτερα.

* Ορχηστικοι.

in the verse, as that foot was most proper for motion, though it was afterwards changed to the iambic ; when the dance or || movement was confined to the songs or intermedes of the chorus, which in the more perfect state of tragedy became, as I before observed, but a small part of the whole drama. What instruments the antients made use of in their theatrical music, and in what it's principal merit consisted, it is perhaps at this distance of time not easy to determine ; if any of my readers are desirous of prying into a subject so dark and intricate, I must refer them to Plutarch's dialogue on this subject, together with Mons. Burette's observations on it in the tenth volume of the hist. de l'Acad. to which may be added P. Menestrier's dissertation on antient and modern music, where they will meet with as much information as I believe can be given them on this head.

THE use of music in tragedy hath been matter of much doubt and contention with modern critics ; M. Dacier thinks it by no means essential, and greatly condemns Aristotle for his approbation of it ; it is notwithstanding indisputable, that on the antient stage, music was a most beautiful adjunct to poetry, and contributed in a great measure to the high finishing and perfection of the Greek drama : we cannot perhaps so easily resolve, how far it may be reconcileable to modern manners, though from some late experiments on § one of our theatres, we have reason to think that, when introduced with propriety, it might be attended with it's desired effect.

On

|| This movement was probably (as an excellent critic observes) becoming, graceful and majestic, as appears from the name usually given it, *εμμεδεια*, ' this word (says he) cannot well be translated into our language, but expresses all that grace and concinnity of motion which the dignity of the choral song required.' See notes on the art of poetry. v. 1, p. 151.

§ In the representation of Merope, the solemnity of the sacrifice scene is greatly heighten'd by the music and song ; the judicious manager of Drury-lane theatre has introduced it into several other tragedies with success.

On the Construction of the Greek Theatre.

THE GREEK THEATRE is amongst those superb monuments of antient taste, genius and magnificence, which would probably have survived the depredations, even of time itself, if ignorance and barbarism had not conspired to ruin and destroy it: of all those noble and costly structures which Athens, and Sparta dedicated to the muses, we have now scarce any thing but a few inconsiderable remains, sufficiently striking to raise our curiosity, but at the same time too mutilated and imperfect to satisfy it. Those writers of antiquity, who have occasionally mention'd the construction of the theatre, as they treated a subject universally known by their cotemporaries, did not think themselves obliged to handle it with that degree of accuracy and precision, which were so necessary for the information of posterity; in consequence of which, they frequently gave names to one part of the building that more properly belong'd to another, and by a confusion of terms, which could not mislead the readers of their own times, involved their successors in a labyrinth of error and obscurity; add to this, that the same fate hath attended the description of the building, which had before happen'd to the several constituent parts of the drama; modern critics too often confound together the Greek and Roman theatre (though they differ most essentially in many parts) we find terms frequently appropriated to one, which belong only to the other; and the whole so imperfectly delineated, by almost every one of them, as to render it throughout a matter of doubt and uncertainty. Some lights however have from time to time been thrown on this dark and intricate subject, whose scatter'd rays, when united and drawn to a point, will exhibit to us the following tolerably accurate, though still imperfect representation of it.

THE ANTIENT GREEK THEATRE, in it's highest state of perfection, was a most spacious, noble, and magnificent structure, built with the most § solid and durable materials, and capable, we are told, of holding thirty thousand spectators: to give my readers a proper idea of it's form, I shall divide it into three principal departments; one for the actors, which they call'd the scene; another for the spectators, under the general denomination of the theatre; and a third call'd the orchestra, allotted to the music, mimes, and dancers. To determine the situation of these three parts, and consequently the disposition of the whole, it is necessary to observe, that the plan (here annex'd) consists on one side of two semi-circles, drawn from the same centre, but of different diameters; and on the other, of a square of the same length, but less by one half; the space between the two semi-circles, was allotted for the spectators; the square at the end, to the actors; and the intervening area in the middle, to the orchestra. Thus we see, the theatre was circular on one side, and square on the other; round the whole were ranges of porticos, (see letters A and B) more or less, according to the number of stories, the most magnificent theatres always having three, one raised above another; to these porticos, which might properly be said to form the body of the edifice, the women were admitted,

§ The theatre at Athens was originally built with wood, but being one day remarkably crowded on the exhibition of a tragedy, written by Pratinas, the benches fell in, many of the spectators were kill'd, and the whole fabric buried in ruins: this melancholy accident induced the Athenians, naturally fond of spectacles, to set about the construction of those superb edifices, which they afterwards made use of, built with the most costly marble, and adorn'd with every thing that could render them solid, noble, splendid, and magnificent.

admitted, being the only places cover'd from rain and heat ; the rest were intirely || open above, and all the representations in the † day-time.

THE seats for the spectators (letter I) extended from the upper portico, down quite to the orchestra (letter H) differing in their width and number with the size of the theatre, and were always so form'd, that a line drawn from the top to the bottom, would touch the extremities of every one of them ; between each story was a wide passage leading to the seats, every one of which, for the better accommodation of the audience, was at such a distance from the seat placed over it, that the feet of the persons above could not touch those who were below.

THE magistrates were separated from the populace by a place appropriated to them call'd Βουλευτικος : the Εφηβικος, or seat of the youths, was assign'd to the young men of quality and distinction ; there were also some προεδριαι, or first seats, allotted to persons of extraordinary merit, where all those were placed, who had distinguish'd themselves by any signal services to the common-wealth ; such in process of time became hereditary, and were appointed for particular families ; all these were very near to, or sometimes in the orchestra, and as close as the structure of the theatre would admit, to the scene, or place of representation.

E

As

|| The amphitheatres in Spain were formerly built something in this manner, having no roof, so that the spectators were often expos'd to rain, heat, and all the inclemency of the seasons.

† In many cities of the two Lombardies (as Riccoboni informs us) the spring of the year is allotted for comedies, which are represented in the day-time without any lights, the play-houses being built in such a manner as to be sufficiently enlighten'd by the sun : and, in the year 1609, a regulation was made in France, by the civil magistrate, by which the players were order'd to open their doors at one o'clock, to begin the entertainment at two, and to put an end to it at half an hour after four.

THE orchestra, being between the two parts of the building, one of which was circular, and the other square, partook of the shape of both, varying in it's size according to that of the theatre, though it's width was always double it's length, and that width always the semi diameter of the whole edifice; to this they enter'd by passages under the seats of the spectators, the whole being intirely on a ‡ level with the ground; this led also to the stair-cases, (letter K) by § which they ascended to the different stories of the theatre, some leading to the seats, others to the porticos, of course turn'd different ways, but all equally wide, disengaged from each other, and so commodious as to give sufficient room for the spectators to go in and out without the least crowding or inconvenience.

BETWEEN the orchestra and the stage was the *υποσκηνηιον*, hyposcenium (letter E) so call'd, because it was close to the scene or place of representation: here, it is most probable, were placed the instruments that accompanied the actors throughout the drama.

* BEYOND this was the large and vacant space call'd *προσκηνηιον*, proscenium, or *λογειον* (letter D) representing the scene of action, which was always some public place, as a road, a grove, a court-yard,

‡ In the Roman theatre, the senators and chief magistrates frequently sat in the orchestra, where finding the inconveniency of the level, it was remedied by raising the seats a little above each other.

§ Mons. Boindin reckons up very accurately the number of the stair-cases, and of the seats, together with many other minute particulars; what I have extracted from him may suffice to give the reader a general idea of the whole structure; if the curious in architecture are desirous of farther information, I must refer them to the discourse itself, which they will find in the first volume of the *hist. de l'acad.* quarto edition, p. 136.

* Between this part and the proscenium, Mr. Boindin places the Greek *θυμελη*, or thymele (letter F) so call'd because in shape it resembled an altar: here,

yard, adjoining to some temple or palace; the length and breadth of this area or stage varied according to the size of the theatre, but always of the same height, and in the Greek theatre never more or less than ten foot.

AT the extremity of the whole building, was the *παρασκηνιον*, or post-scenium (letter G) that place behind the scenes, where the actors dress'd themselves, and prepared the habits, scenes, machines, and every thing necessary to the representation.

AT the back of the stage (letter L) were the triangular machines for the scenery, call'd by the Greeks || *περιακτοι*, which as they turn'd on their own axis, might be shifted on any occasion, and exhibited three different views or changes of scene; these were not made use of in tragedy, which required but one scene throughout, but most probably at the end of it, to prepare the exhibition of the comedy or mime, which in the antient theatre frequently succeeded each other, perhaps two or three times on the same day.

E 2

AMONGST

here, he imagines, the chorus was placed, and perform'd their songs and dances: but this place, with all due deference to that ingenious critic, could by no means be allotted to the chorus, being much too distant from the stage, where, we know from the tragedies themselves, the chorus must always be, as, besides the songs or intermedes, it bears a part in the dialogue throughout the piece, and consequently must stand close to the other actors.

|| *Utrunque alia interdum portæ quarum in postibus affixæ machinæ περιακτοι dictæ, quæ pro re ac tempore circumagebantur. Suid.* To these Virgil is supposed to allude in the third book of the Georgics.

Vel scena ut versis discedat frontibus————

Which is thus explain'd by Servius. 'Scena, (says he) quæ fiebat aut versilis aut ductilis; versilis tunc erat cum subito tota machinis convertebatur, & aliam picturæ faciem ostendebat; ductilis tunc cum tractis tabulatis hæc atque illæ species picturæ nudabatur interior.' What Virgil mentions, was probably an improvement on the *περιακτοι*, as practiced in the Roman theatre.

AMONGST the many peculiarities of the Greek theatre, with regard to it's construction, there is not perhaps any thing so remarkable, and which we can so difficultly form any idea of, as the *echoæ*, or brazen vessels, which, according to † Vitruvius, were made use of by the Greeks, to render the articulation distinct, and give a more extensive power to the voice, an expedient doubtless extremely necessary in so large a theatre; for this purpose we are told, that they had recourse to several round concave plates of brass, placed under the seats of the spectators, so disposed and contrived by the most exact geometrical and harmonic proportions as to reverberate the voice, and carry the words of the actor to the farthest part of the building; the manner in which this was perform'd is, I must confess, to me utterly incomprehensible; certain it is, that no idea can be form'd of it without the most profound knowledge of antient music, and antient architecture: I shall not therefore trouble my readers with an explication of what few I believe would be able to comprehend; but if any of them are desirous of a more intimate acquaintance with these Brazen Echos, I must refer them to the sixth book of the learned Vitruvius, and Mons. Burette's treatise on antient music.

† *Vasa ærea*, (says Vitruvius) quæ in cellis sub gradibus mathematica ratione collocantur, ad symphonias musicas, sive concertus, ita componuntur uti vox scenici sonitus conveniens in dispositionibus tactu cum offenderit, aucta cum incremento clarior ac suavior ad spectatorum perveniat aures.

To these *echoæ* it is supposed, Cassiodorus alludes, where he says, 'tragedia, concavis repercussionibus roborata, talem sonum videtur efficere, ut & pæne ab homine non credatur.'

Cass. ep. 51, lib. 1.

On the Scenes, Machines and Decorations.

THOUGH we have no genuine or regular account now extant of the machines and decorations of the Greek theatre, we have sufficient reason to conclude from the tragedies themselves still remaining, that such things were made use of in the representation; as we find in almost every one of them gods ascending and descending, ghosts and furies frequently appearing on the stage, with divinities celestial and terrestrial; for all these, we need not doubt but that the ancients had machines of various kinds, according to the various exigencies and circumstances that required them; and, as we learn from the scatter'd remains of Hesychius, Pollux, and other writers, were no strangers to * trap-doors, flying chariots, magnificent arches, flights, ropes, pulleys, and in short all the mechanical apparatus of the stage. As to the scenery, we know that the strict regard paid by the Greek tragedians to the unity of place confined the whole representation of their pieces to one particular spot; this however we find was sumptuously adorn'd with all the embellishments, which art or nature could furnish; magnificent † columns, porticos, statues, paintings, basso-relievos, every thing, which the elegant taste and genius of Greece could produce, was added to enrich the scene;

† Scenæ tragicæ (says Vitruvius) deformantur columnis, fastigiis, & signis, reliquisque regalibus rebus.

* *Αναπείσματα*, sunt rudentes scenici quibus per tractoria organa latentes personæ sustollebantur in scenam. *Εωρημα*, rudentes qui ex alto suspensi sunt ut sustineant eos qui aere ferri videntur. Pollux.

scene ; even so early as in the time of Æschylus, we are † told that the decorations of the theatre were made according to the exactest rules of perspective. The whole theatre (porticos excepted) being, as I before observed, uncover'd, and consequently expos'd to the heat of the sun, and inclemency of the weather ; a kind of thin curtain, fasten'd probably to a large pillar or pole in the centre of the building, was extended over the whole ; as the heat notwithstanding (which is always the case in our modern tents) frequently penetrated through them, and the breaths of so numerous an assembly must have been offensive, they had recourse to artificial showers of rain, which they convey'd from the top of the porticos through the statues that were dispers'd over the different parts of the building ; * Mr. Boindin adds, that the water on these occasions was always scented, so that the spectators were not only refresh'd by this gentle dew falling upon them, but at the same time regaled with the most exquisite perfume.

† Tum Athenis, Agatarchus, Æschylo docente, tragediam primus scenam fecit, & de eo commentarium reliquit, ex quo moniti Democritus & Anaxagoras de eadem re scripserunt, quemadmodum oporteat ad aciem oculorum, radiatorumque extensionem, centro constituto ad lineas ratione naturali respondere ; uti de re incertâ certæ imagines ædificiorum in scenarum picturis redderent speciem, & quæ in directis planisque frontibus sint figurata, alia absidentia, alia prominentia esse videantur. Vitruvius, lib. viii.

* As I do not remember that we have any authority from antient Greek writers for this anecdote, I should rather be inclined to consider the perfumed water as a refinement of modern luxury, and ascribe it to the improvements of the Roman theatre.



On the M A S Q U E S.

IT appears from the united testimonies of several antient writers, that the actors of Greece never appear'd on the stage in tragedy, or any other species of the drama without masques: it is most probable, that before the time of Æschylus, to whom || Horace ascribes this invention, they disguised their features either, as in the days of Thespis, by daubing them with the lees of wine, or by painting, false hair, and other artifices of the same kind with those, which are practiced in the modern theatre: Masques however were soon introduced, and look'd on, we may imagine, in those days as a most ingenious device; that, which they made use of in tragedy, was, according to the best information we can gather concerning it, a kind of casque or helmet, which cover'd the whole head, representing not only the face, but the beard, hair, ears, and even, in the women's masques, all the ornaments of the coif, or cap, being made of § different materials, according to the
several

|| Suidas and Athenæus attribute the invention of masques to the poet Chœrilus. Horace gives the honour to Æschylus; but Aristotle, who we may suppose was as well acquainted with this matter as any of them, fairly acknowledges himself entirely ignorant of it. 'Τῆς δὲ προσωπᾶς, (says he) ἀπεδωκε, ηγνοῦται.'

§ The first masques were made of the leaves of a plant, to which the Greeks on this account gave the name of προσωπιον, 'quidam (says Pliny) Arcion 'personatam vocant, cujus folio nullum est latius.' Virgil mentions them as composed of the barks of trees,

Oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis,
And Pollux tells us, that they were made of leather, lined with cloth or stuff,
ἐνδοτεν δ' ὄθονιον, ἐξωτεν δὲ σκυτινιον προσωπιον.

several improvements, which it received from time to time; the most perfect and durable were of wood, executed with the greatest care, by sculptors of the first rank and eminence, who received their directions from the poet. It seems to have been an establish'd opinion amongst the antients, that their heroes and demi-gods, who were generally the subject of their tragedies, were of an extraordinary size, far surpassing that of common mortals; we must not be surpris'd therefore to find their tragic poets, in compliance with this popular prejudice, raising them upon ‡ the cothurnus, swelling them to an immense magnitude, and by the assistance of a § large and frightful masque, endeavouring to fill the minds of the spectators with a religious awe, and veneration of them: the tragic masques were generally copied from the busts or statues of the principal personages, and consequently convey'd the most exact idea and resemblance of them, which must have given an air of probability to the whole: those, which represented * ghosts and furies, were made still more terrible and frightful; but

‡ The cothurnus, or buskin, was a kind of large and high shoe, the sole of which, being made of very thick wood, raised the actors to an extraordinary size; Juvenal tells us, that it made them appear extremely tall, and compares an actress without her cothurnus to a pygmy,

—————breviorque videtur

Virgine pygmæa nullis adjuta cothurnis.

The cothurnus was probably of the same form as the high shoe, or piece of cork, bound about with tin or silver, worn by the Spanish women, call'd a chioppine, and which, it should seem by a passage in Shakespear, was used on our own stage. 'Your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last: by the altitude of a chioppine. Hamlet, act 2, scene 7.

§ The tragic masques had large and expanded mouths, as if (says the humorous Lucian) they were about to devour the spectators, *ως καταπιωμενος τις θεατας.*

* The masque commonly used was call'd simply *προσωπειον*; the others, *μορμολυκειον*, and *γοργονειον*.

but the masques of the || dancers, or persons, who form'd the body of the chorus, had nothing disagreeable.

As in the infancy of tragedy there were probably but few actors, the use of masques gave each of them an opportunity of playing several parts, wherein the character, age, and sex were different, without being discover'd; the large opening of the mouth was so contrived as to increase the sound of the voice, and send it to the farthest part of the theatre, which was so extremely large and spacious, that without some such assistance we cannot easily conceive how the actor could be well heard or seen; in all theatrical painting, scenery and decoration, the objects, we know, must be magnify'd beyond the life and reality, to produce their proper effect; and, in the same manner, we may imagine that, in so extensive an area as the Greek theatre, it might be necessary to exaggerate the features, and enlarge the form of the actor; add to this, that at such a distance as most of the spectators were, the natural expression of the eyes and countenance must be entirely lost. The sanguine admirers of every thing that is antient bring many more arguments to defend the tragic * masque; but after all that can be said in it's favour, it is perhaps scarce defensible; the face is certainly the best index of the mind, and the passions

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|| ' Τη δε ορχησθ σχημα (says Lucian) κοσμιον και ευπρεπες. Το δε προσωπον αυτο καλλιστον, τω υποκειμενω δραματι εοικος, η κερηνος, αλλα συμμεμυκος.'

* Masques have had their admirers in modern as well as in antient times, and been used on more stages than that of Greece; even towards the middle of the last century, the actors both in tragedy and comedy on the French theatre wore masques. The English is doubtless in this respect, as well as in many others, infinitely superior to the Athenian stage; notwithstanding which, I will promise to join the προσωποφιλοι, and vote for the restoration of the antient masque, whenever they will shew me one that can represent the happy features of Quin, in the Character of Falstaff, or give us an idea of a frantic Lear, like the look and face of the inimitable Garrick.

are as forcibly express'd by the features, as by the words and gesture of the performer: the Greeks in this, as in many other particulars, sacrificed propriety, truth and reason, to magnificence and vanity.

ALL the expences of the theatre were defray'd by the state, and were indeed so considerable, that nothing but the purse of an opulent republic could possibly have supported them, as it is confidently affirm'd by § historians that Athens spent more in dramatic representations than in all her wars.

§ This assertion, which seems rather hyperbolic, is notwithstanding supported by the grave Plutarch, who, speaking of the Athenians, assures us, that the representation of the Bacchanals, Phœnissæ, OEdipus, Antigone, Medea, and Electra, cost them more money than the defence of their own liberties in the field, or all their contests with the barbarians.

Of the time when Tragedy flourish'd in Greece.

IT was not my design in this short Dissertation (nor could indeed be comprehended within the limits of it) to point out with Aristotle what tragedy ought to be, but simply to shew what it was during the lives of the great triumvirate, as far as we can judge from the remains now extant; in my account of it's several parts therefore I have not follow'd the steps of the great critic, but principally confined myself to those particulars, which distinguish the antient from the modern drama, and which may best enable us to form a proper and adequate idea of the Greek tragedy; but even the most perfect knowledge of all the essential and constituent parts will be found insufficient for this purpose, unless we take into our view also the time when, and the very spot where every piece was exhibited. Dramatic, as well as every other species of poetry, is best known and distinguish'd by the place of it's birth; it will take it's form, colour, and complection from it's native soil, as naturally as water derives it's taste and qualities from the different kinds of earth, through which it flows: it is absolutely necessary, before we can judge impartially of the Greek tragedies, to transport ourselves to the scene where they were represented, to shake off the Englishman for a time, and put on the Athenian.

It has been with great truth remark'd, that there is allotted to every nation upon earth a particular period, which may be call'd their zenith of perfection, to which they approach by slow degrees, and from which, they gradually and insensibly recede: in this happy age of power and prosperity, the arts and sciences,

taste, genius, and literature have always shone with distinguish'd lustre: such was the time when Athens gave laws to all Greece, whilst the glorious victories of Marathon and Salamis animated every tongue with eloquence, and fill'd every breast with exultation; that haughty and successful people maintain'd for a long time her sovereignty over the neighbouring nations; her councils were influenced by prudence, and her battles crown'd with conquest; the treasure, which she had seized in the temple at Delphos, enabled her not only to carry on her wars with success, but left her a plentiful reserve also to supply her luxuries: this was the age of heroes, philosophers and poets; when architecture, painting, and sculpture, foster'd by the genial warmth of power and protection, so conspicuously display'd their several beauties, and produced all those superb monuments of antient taste and genius, which united to distinguish this illustrious æra: during this happy period, tragedy appear'd in her meridian splendor, when the great triumvirate exhibited before the most polite and refined nation then upon earth those excellent pieces, which extorted applause, honours and rewards, from their cotemporaries, and ensured to them the deserved admiration of all posterity: it may indeed with great truth be asserted, that the same remarkable love of order and simplicity, the same justness of symmetry and proportion, the same elegance, truth and sublimity, which appear'd in the buildings, pictures and statues of that age, are conspicuous also in the antient drama.

IN the time of the Greek tragedy, the Athenians dictated as it were to all mankind: proud by nature, and elated by riches and prosperity, they look'd down with the utmost contempt on the neighbouring nations, whom they stiled and treated as barbarians; as a republic, the avow'd enemies of monarchy and dependence; as a free people, bold and impatient of restraint or contradiction; strongly attach'd to their own laws and customs; lively and active,

ive, but inconstant and superstitious; their manners plain and simple, but their taste at the same time elegant and refined. As the theatre was supported entirely at the expence of the public, the public directed all it's operations; we might naturally expect therefore, that the poet would for his own sake take care to adapt his compositions to the public taste; to fall in with national prejudices and superstitions; to sooth the pride, flatter the self-love, and adopt the opinions of his fellow-citizens: we must not wonder to hear, as we constantly do, (in the tragedies that remain) the praises of Athens perpetually resounded, the superiority of her laws and constitution extoll'd, and her form of government prefer'd to every other; oblique hints, or direct accusations of folly and weakness in her enemies; public facts frequently alluded to, and public events recorded; their own festivals, sacrifices, † religious rites, and ceremonies, carefully and accurately described; Sparta and Thebes, as rival states, occasionally satyrized and condemn'd; and above all, every opportunity taken to point out the evils of monarchy, and engrave their favourite democratical principles on the hearts of the people: it is not improbable but that many of those moral sentences, and political apothegms, which at this distance of time appear cold and insipid to us, had, besides their general tendency, some double meaning, some allusion to particular facts and circumstances, which gave them an additional lustre: without this key to the Greek theatre, it is impossible to form a right idea of antient tragedy, which was not, like our own, mere matter of amusement, but the channel of public instruction, and the instrument of public policy; those readers therefore, who are utterly unacquainted with the religion, laws, and customs of Athens, are by no means adequate judges
of

† See, amongst many other instances, the nob'e description of the Pythian games, in the second act of *Electra*, v. 1, p. 137, of my translation of Sophocles, and the sacred grove of the Eumenides, in the *OEdipus Coloneus*, v. 2, p. 292.

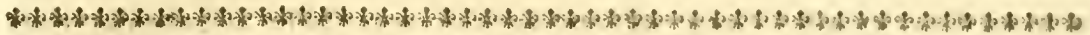
of it ; they only § condemn, for the most part, what they do not understand, and rashly judge of the whole edifice, whilst they view but an inconsiderable part of the building. But so warmly are we attach'd to what lies before us, and so prejudiced in favour of those modes and customs, which are establish'd amongst ourselves, that we generally rate the merit of past performances by the standard and rule of present practice ; the antients therefore are subject to the disadvantage of being tried, not as justice demands by their laws, but by our own.

AND here it is worthy of our observation to remark, that the Greek tragedy seems, in it's whole progress, to have kept pace with the place of it's birth, and to have flourish'd and declined with it's native country : the rise of Athens, from meanness and obscurity to power and splendor, may be dated from the battle of Marathon, which laid the foundation of all her future glory ; soon after which, we find Æschylus forming his plan of antient tragedy ; after him arose the immortal Sophocles, who improved upon, and greatly exceeded his illustrious master ; to these succeeded Euripides, born ten years after the battle of Marathon, and on the very day of the sea-fight at Salamis : whilst these illustrious writers flourish'd, Athens flourish'd also, for above half a century : Euripides was fifty years of age, when the Peloponnesian war began ; from which period the superiority of Athens visibly declined, and was soon entirely destroy'd by the rival power of Sparta, in confederacy with the Persian monarch. Sophocles, happy in not surviving the honour and liberty of his country, expired one year before the taking of Athens by Lyfander, when the sovereignty of Greece devolved to the Lacedæmonians.

§ *Damnant quod non intelligunt.*

Quintilian.

Of



Of the three Great TRAGEDIANS.

ÆSCHYLUS was born at Athens, in the first year of the || fixtieth olympiad: he embraced very early in life the profession of * arms, and distinguish'd himself as an officer at the famous battles of Marathon, Salamis and Plataea: the perpetual scenes of slaughter and bloodshed, in which he was during a long series of years unavoidably engaged; seem to have tinged his imagination with that portion of the fierce and terrible so distinguishable in all his pieces: during the intervals of his military occupation, he found time to write no less than seventy, or according to some historians, ninety tragedies, only seven of which are now extant: when he was pretty far advanced in years, he lost the poetical prize to Sophocles, then but a boy, or, as other writers with more probability assert, to Simonides, in an elegy on the heroes, who fell at Marathon; a circumstance, which so deeply affected him, that he immediately withdrew from Athens, and retired to the court of Hiero, king of Sicily, a friend of the muses, whose palace was a kind of asylum for the discontented poets of Greece; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and splendor, to the age of sixty-five; the writers of his life, not willing to admit that so great a poet could dye a common death, have thought proper to dignify his last moments with a circumstance, which carries with it more
of

|| Five hundred and forty years before Christ.

* He had two brothers, who were likewise in the army, Cynegirus and Aminias: at the battle of Salamis, the former lost his life, the latter one of his arms.

of the marvellous than the probable : an oracle had, it seems, declared (for oracles were always ready on these occasions) that Æschylus should fall by the hand of heaven ; accordingly, that this might be fulfill'd, it is reported that an eagle was seen in the air, holding in her talons a tortoise, which (unfortunately for the bard) she let go, and dropping on the head of Æschylus, who happen'd to be walking beneath, fractured his skull : he is said to have gain'd thirteen victories over his rival poets, which one would think was an ample recompence for the single failure that gave him so much uneasiness. His tragedies were greatly admired during his life, and after his death held in the highest esteem, insomuch that a decree was pass'd by the senate, declaring, that if any person would exhibit the tragedies of Æschylus, the state would bear the charges of the chorus, and defray the whole expence of the representation ; an honour, which probably had not been bestow'd on any poet before his time, though afterwards, as I observed above, they were generally play'd at the public cost.

ÆSCHYLUS is a bold, nervous, animated writer ; his imagination fertile, but licentious ; his judgment true, but ungovern'd ; his genius lively, but uncultivated ; his sentiments noble and sublime, but at the same time wild, irregular, and frequently fantastic ; his plots, for the most part, rude and inartificial ; his scenes unconnected, and ill-placed ; his language generally poignant and expressive, though in many places turgid and obscure, and even too often degenerating into fustian and bombast ; his characters strongly mark'd, but all partaking of that wild fierceness, which is the characteristic of their author ; his peculiar excellency was in raising terror and astonishment, in warm and descriptive scenes of war and slaughter : if we consider the state of the drama when he undertook to reform and improve it, we shall behold him with admiration ; if we compare him with his two illustrious successors

successor he hides his diminish'd head, and appears far less conspicuous : were we to draw a parallel between dramatic poetry and painting, we should perhaps stile him the Julio Romano of antient tragedy.

SOPHOCLES was born at Colone, a burgh or village in Attica ; his father Sophilus was, as some writers tell us, a * blacksmith ; or, according to a more favourable heraldry, master of a forge : as the profession of arms was at that time more honourable, and probably more advantageous than any other, Sophocles enter'd into it, and follow'd the steps of his master Æschylus, both as a soldier and a poet ; in the former capacity he had the honour to serve under the great § Pericles. As a dramatic writer he was early distinguish'd for his extraordinary abilities, which first placed him on a level, and afterwards raised him to a superiority over his illustrious rival ; he is supposed to have written one hundred and twenty tragedies, only seven of which are now remaining ; these were received by his cotemporaries with the applause they so highly deserved : it is remark'd, that he never acted himself in any of his plays, as Æschylus and Euripides did, his voice being too weak and low for the stage ; though he was always present at the representation, and received the applauses of the audience, who, we are told, seldom fail'd to signify their approbation by a loud and general clap, both at his entrance into, and leaving the theatre : he was crown'd twenty

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times,

* Much ink has been shed by the commentators on this subject, both with regard to Sophocles and Demosthenes also, who was, it seems, in the same predicament, it not being determined whether his father was a vulcan or a common cyclop.

§ Pericles, if we may believe Athenæus, used to say that Sophocles was a good soldier, but a bad officer ; a circumstance, which, if he had not succeeded better as a poet, it is probable would never have reach'd posterity.

times, and though he probably sometimes shared the fate of his brother poets by unjust censure, could never be prevail'd on, as his rivals were, to leave his native country, to which he took || every opportunity of shewing his sincerest attachment: with regard to his death, historians (if scholiasts and commentators may be so call'd) have indulged themselves in the same liberty, which they took with his predecessor Æschylus; some kill him with a grape-stone; others tell us, that he died with joy at being crown'd for one of his tragedies; whilst a third set gravely assure us, that having one day an inclination to play a part in his own Antigone, he dipp'd into a speech too long for his weak lungs, and expired, merely for want of a better breath, in the midst of it.

AFTER all, as Sophocles, according to various testimonies, lived till ninety, it is not improbable that he might have died of ‡ extreme old age, a distemper, which is seldom perhaps more favourable to poets than to other men: the Athenians erected a sumptuous monument in memory of him, on which was engraved a swarm of § bees, in allusion to the name generally given him
on

|| It is with great reason imagined, that Sophocles laid the scene of his latter OEdipus in Colonè, with a purpos'd design of doing honour to the place of his nativity.

‡ The story of his sons ingratitude, told by Plutarch and others, is omitted here, because my readers will find it related in my notes on the translation of the OEdipus Coloneus. See v. 2, p. 289.

Sophocles had several children, one of which, whose name was Iophon, is said to have inherited the dramatic genius of his father, and to have written four tragedies, the names only of which are come down to us, viz. Ilium, Achilles, Telephus, and Actæon.

§ Sophocles was universally stiled, the Bee. Some commentators have taken the bees from off his tomb, and hived them in his cradle, assuring us, that when Sophocles was an infant, a swarm of them was seen to alight upon his lips, which was at that time look'd on as a presage of his future eloquence.

on account of his verses, which are indeed wonderfully soft and harmonious, or, as a nobler poet even than Sophocles himself expresses it, sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb.

SOPHOCLES may with great truth be call'd the prince of antient dramatic poets ; his fables, at least of all those tragedies now extant, are interesting and well-chosen, his plots regular and well-conducted, his sentiments elegant, noble and sublime, his incidents natural, his diction simple, his manners and characters striking, equal and unexceptionable, his chorusses well adapted to the subject, his moral reflections pertinent and useful, and his numbers in every part to the last degree sweet and harmonious ; the warmth of his imagination is so temper'd by the perfection of his judgment, that his spirit however animated never wanders into licentiousness, whilst at the same time the fire of his genius seldom suffers the most uninteresting parts of his tragedy to sink into coldness and insipidity ; his peculiar excellence seems to lye in the † descriptive ; and, exclusive of his dramatic powers, he is certainly a greater poet than either of his illustrious rivals : were I to draw a similitude of him, as I did of Æschylus, from painting, I should say that his ordonnance was so just, his figures so well group'd and contrasted, his colours so glowing and natural, all his pieces in short executed in so bold and masterly a stile, as to wrest the palm from every other hand, and point him out as the Raphael of the antient drama.

EURIPIDES, the son of Mnesarchus and Clito, was a native of Salamis, to which place his parents had withdrawn to shelter themselves from the storm of war with which Greece was threaten'd by the invasion of Xerxes ; he was born in the second

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year

† For a proof of this, I would refer my readers to his fine description of the Pythian games in the *Electra* ; the distress of *Philoctetes* in *Lemnos* ; and the praises of Athens in the *OEdipus Coloneus*.

year of the * seventy-fifth olympiad, in the midst of all the triumphal pomp, which follow'd the famous victories of Salamis and Plataea: as the genius of Euripides was not turn'd like that of his two predecessors towards a military life, he attach'd himself to philosophy, at that time the fashionable taste and study of all Greece, under the celebrated || Anaxagoras; but partly perhaps from the fear of incurring his master's fate, and partly from the natural bent of his own mind, soon left the perplexing paths of science, and gave himself up to the more inviting charms of poetry: as the stage was probably then, as it is now, far the most lucrative branch of it, he applied himself early to the writing of tragedies, in which he succeeded so well, as to enter the lists with Æschylus and Sophocles: the immortal Socrates, to whom we may suppose he was in a great measure indebted for the applause and encouragement bestow'd on him, not only honour'd him with his patronage and protection, but enter'd into the most intimate friendship and connection with him; he is even said to have assisted him in several of his plays; the moral and philosophic air, which runs through them all, seems indeed greatly to favour this opinion, which was industriously propagated by his § enemies, to obscure if possible the lustre of such conspicuous merit;

* Four hundred seventy five years before Christ.

|| Anaxagoras, amongst many other new opinions advanced by him, had asserted that the sun was a globe of fire, which gave so much offence to the ignorance and superstition of his countrymen, that he was forced to submit to a voluntary exile, as the only means of saving his life, which would otherwise have fallen a sacrifice to the enraged multitude.

§ Diogenes Laertius, speaking of Socrates, says, εδοκει συμποισιν Ευριπιδη. Mnesilochus told the Athenians, that Euripides was only a hammer-man to Socrates, and calls him Ευριπιδης Σωκρατογομφευσ; the comic poets frequently reproach him for his obligations to the philosopher.

merit; he gain'd ‡ five victories, and is supposed to have written seventy-five tragedies, only nineteen of which are now extant; some * letters of Euripides, handed down to us, take notice of a quarrel between him and Sophocles, and give an account also of their perfect reconciliation; though his tragedies were for the most part well received by his cotemporaries, we may imagine that, like other poets, he met with some ill treatment from them, as we find him in the latter part of his life at the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon, who loaded him with favours, and treated him with all the respect due to his character and abilities; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and splendor about three years, when unfortunately wandering one day into a solitary place, he was set on by a pack of hounds, and || torn to pieces, at the age of seventy-five. Aulus Gellius informs us, that the Athenians sent to Macedon for his body, and had prepared to grace it with a pompous and splendid funeral, but the Macedonians refusing to deliver it, they contented themselves with erecting a magnificent tomb to his memory, and gravings his name and honours on the empty marble; a copy of his works was carefully deposited amongst the archives, and so highly esteem'd, that a king of Ægypt in vain for a long time solicited a copy of them, which
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‡ Some commentators correct the text of A. Gellius, and make it fifteen.

* The English reader may find these letters at the end of my translation of the Epistles of Phalaris, publish'd in 1749.

|| One of his biographers acquaints us, that the dogs were planted there on purpose, and set on by a brother bard, grown jealous of his rising reputation, who took this opportunity to dispatch him; whether there be any truth in the whole story is extremely disputable; the author however might very well expect to gain credit for it, as it has been customary time out of mind, and continues so to this day, for rival poets to tear one another to pieces.

the Athenians positively refused, till a famine happening in Greece, the king in return refused to sell them corn; necessity at last prevailing, they parted with the manuscript, and the king acknowledged so singular a favour, by permitting the merchants of Athens to take away as much corn as they wanted, without paying the usual tribute.

IN such high esteem were the works of this poet, that many noble Athenians being taken prisoners at † Syracuse, the unfortunate captives were all put to death, except those, who could repeat any passages from the plays of Euripides; these men, and these alone they pardon'd, care's'd, treated with the utmost respect, and afterwards set them at liberty.

EURIPIDES, fortunately for his own character as well as for posterity, is come down to us more perfect and entire than either of his cotemporaries; his merit therefore is more easily ascertain'd; his fables are generally interesting, his plots frequently irregular and artificial, his characters sometimes unequal, but for the most part striking and well contrasted, his sentiments remarkably fine, just and proper, his diction soft, elegant, and persuasive; he abounds much more in moral apophthegms and reflections than Æschylus or Sophocles, which as they are not always introduced with propriety give some of his tragedies a stiff and scholastic appearance, with which the severer critics have not fail'd to reproach him: it is most probable however that in this he complied with the taste of his age, and in obedience to the dictates of his friend and master Socrates, who, we may suppose, thought it no disgrace to this favourite poet, to deviate from the rigid rules of the drama, in order to render it more subservient to the noble purposes of piety and virtue; there is besides

† This story is told at large, in a small and elegant tract lately publish'd, intitled, an Essay on the influence of Philosophy upon the fine arts, p. 21.

sides in his dialogue a didactic and argumentative turn, which favours strongly of the Socratic disputant, and which probably procured him the name of the * philosopher of the theatre.

It is said of Sophocles, that he painted men as they ought to be ; of Euripides, that he painted them as they were ; a quaint remark, which I shall leave the critics to comment and explain, only observing, that the latter is much more familiar than the former, descends much lower into private life, and consequently lets down in some measure the dignity of the buskin, which in Sophocles is always carefully supported : there are some scenes in Euripides where the ideas are so coarse, and the expression so low and vulgar, as, if translated with the utmost caution, would perhaps greatly shock the delicacy and refinement of modern manners ; the feeling reader notwithstanding will be amply recompenced by that large portion of the tender and pathetic, the peculiar excellency of this poet, which is diffused throughout his works ; his chorusses are remarkably beautiful and poetical, they do not indeed, as Aristotle has observed, always naturally arise from and correspond with the incidents of the drama ; this fault however his chorusses generally make amends for by the harmony of their numbers, and the many fine moral and religious sentiments, which they contain.

UPON the whole, though Euripides had not perhaps so sublime a genius as Æschylus, or a judgment so perfect as Sophocles, he seems to have written more to the heart than either of them ; and if I were to place him with the other two in the school of painters, I should be inclined, from the softness of his pencil, to call him the Corregio of the antient drama.

* ὁ φιλοσοφος της σκηνης.

FROM the works of these three illustrious writers, and from them § alone we must draw all our knowledge of the antient Greek tragedy, which in the view we have here taken of it appears to be full, complete and perfect, and has been miserably disjointed and torn to pieces by the moderns: from the ruins of this noble edifice have arisen two very imperfect structures, the opera and tragedy of latter times, both greatly though not equally defective, the former, confining itself merely to the eye and ear, makes but a slight impression on the mind, whilst the latter, from it's omission of the chorus, music, scenery, and decoration, falls short of that beauty and perfection, which is only to be found in the antient drama; we must at the same time fairly acknowledge that our manners and customs, our opinions, views, taste and judgment, are so different from those of Greece, that her drama is by no means in every respect a proper model and standard for modern poets, and must, after all we can advance in it's favour, always remain among those reproachful monuments of the purity and simplicity of former ages, which we cannot imitate though we are forced to admire.

It must be confess'd, that antient tragedy hath it's share with every thing else of human imperfection: too strict an attention to the unities hath fetter'd and confined it; many of it's beauties are merely local and temporal; the plots are frequently uninteresting,

§ Of all the Greek tragedies produced by various writers, and which are almost innumerable, we have only thirty-three now remaining, though according to the generally received account, no less than two hundred and sixty or upwards were written only by the three great tragedians; all the rest, except a few inconsiderable fragments, fell a sacrifice to barbarity, and are buried in oblivion.

uninteresting, and ill-conducted, the speeches either too long or too short, the expressions sometimes coarse and indelicate; in the general management and representation of the whole, too much is sacrificed to popular prejudice, superstition and vanity, the ruling passions of an Athenian audience: too strong an attachment to the laws, customs, and form of government then prevailing, threw a dull air of uniformity over the drama; the same story, the same characters and sentiments, even the same expressions too often occur in different tragedies; that simplicity, which so distinguish'd the manners of the antients, had naturally it's influence over their taste also; they selected one plain but noble object, and all the variety, which their dramatic poets aim'd at, or which the spectators required of them, was to place that in different lights, without suffering any other to intercept the prospect of it; they admitted no episodes, under-plots, or any of those extraneous incidental ornaments, which make up modern performances, § and confined themselves principally to the faults and perfections of the great, as Milton observes of them,

‘ High actions, and high passions best describing;’

But because their taste was more correct and severe, it doth by no means follow, that it was less true and perfect than our own: the moderns heap incident on incident, sentiment on sentiment, and character on character; a change, which is perhaps rather to be attributed to the corruption of our taste than to the improvement of it: it is always a mark of a vitiated stomach, when

H

wholesome

§ One of the greatest advantages of modern tragedy over the antient is perhaps it's judicious descent from the adventures of demi-gods, kings, and heroes, into the humbler walk of private life, which is much more interesting to the generality of mankind.

wholesome and natural food is rejected with disgust, and provocatives used to raise the appetite; in the same manner, I cannot but be of opinion, that our impatient thirst after what critics affect to call business is nothing but the result of false taste, and depraved judgment: because antient tragedy is not crowded with a heap of unnatural episodes, stuff'd with similes, metaphors, imagery and poetical flowers, the moderns treat it with contempt, and find nothing in it but a poverty of sentiment, a want of order and connection in the scenes, a flatness and insipidity in the dialogue, a coarseness and indelicacy in the expression; but even if we should grant the truth of every objection, there would still remain, to compensate for all these real or seeming imperfections, a variety of true and striking beauties: in antient tragedy, and there only, we shall find a most exact and faithful picture of the manners of Greece, it's religious and civil policy, sublimity both of sentiment and diction, regularity, symmetry and proportion, excellent moral aphorisms and reflections, together with a most elegant and amiable simplicity diffused through every page.

IN a word, to affirm, as many who have more learning than judgment sometimes will, that there are no good tragedies but the antient, is the affectation of scholastic pedantry; to deny them their deserved applause, and treat them with ridicule and contempt, is, on the other hand, the effect of modern pride, ignorance, and petulancy: upon the whole, French, Italian, Spanish and German critics, may perhaps find some excuse for their severe animadversions on the antient Greek tragedy; it may exercise their envy, and find employment for their spleen and ill-nature, as they have nothing of their own to put in competition with it; but Englishmen should be above such envy,
and

and such malevolence, because they can boast a dramatic writer, superior to all that antiquity ever produced: we may safely join with the most sanguine partisans of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in the sincerest admiration of their several excellencies, and rejoice within ourselves to see them all united and surpass'd in the immortal and inimitable Shakespear.

F I N I S.

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1 2 3 4 5



A J A X.



Dramatis Personæ.

M I N E R V A.

U L Y S S E S.

A J A X.

T E C M E S S A, wife of Ajax.

T E U C E R, brother to Ajax.

A G A M E M N O N.

M E N E L A U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

C H O R U S,

Composed of antient men of Salamis.

A J A X.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

A field near the tent of A J A X.

M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

M I N E R V A.

SON of Laertes, thy unwear'd spirit
Is ever watchful to surprife the foe ;
I have obferv'd thee wand'ring midft the tents
In fearch of Ajax, where his ftation lyes,
At th' utmoft verge, and meas'ring o'er his fteps
But late imprefs'd; like Sparta's hounds of fcent

B

Sagacious,

Sparta's bounds, &c. The dogs of Sparta, according to all the beft authors of antiquity, were remarkable for their fwiftness and quick fcent; Virgil mentions the veloces Spartæ catulos; Gratius Faliscus also takes notice of them. Our countryman Shakespear, therefore, we see had good authority for his recommendation of Theseus's hounds, who he tells us

Were of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so fanded, &c. See his Midsummer night's dream.

Sagacious, dost thou trace him, nor in vain ;
 For know, the man thou seek'st is not far from thee ;
 Yonder he lyes, with reeking brow and hands
 Deep-stain'd with gore ; cease then thy search, and tell me
 Wherefore thou com'st, that so I may inform
 Thy doubting mind, and best assist thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Minerva, dearest of th' immortal pow'rs,
 For, tho' I see thee not, that well-known voice
 Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my soul,
 Right hast thou said, I come to search my foe,
 Shield-bearing Ajax ; him alone I seek :
 A deed of horror hath he done this night,

If

Tho' I see thee not, &c. It was the acknowledged and indisputable privilege of heathen gods and goddesses to be visible and invisible, as they thought proper, and likewise to extend, whenever they pleased, that privilege to others ; in the two first scenes of Ajax we have instances of both ; in the first, Minerva is not seen by Ulysses, and in the second, Ulysses, by the power of Minerva, is render'd invisible to Ajax. The reason of the latter is sufficiently evident ; for the former it is not so easy to assign any, as the goddess had descended on purpose to converse with her favourite ; to conceal herself therefore from his sight seems unaccountable.

Shield-bearing Ajax, &c. The greater Ajax is distinguish'd by Homer, from whom Sophocles copies his character, for his enormous shield, which none but himself was able to lift ; in the seventh book of the Iliad we find it thus described.

Stern Telamon behind his ample shield,
 As from a brazen tow'r, o'erlook'd the field ;
 Huge was its orb, with sev'n thick folds o'ercast
 Of tough bull-hides, of solid brass the last. POPE.

If it be he, for yet we are to know
 The certain proof, and therefore came I here
 A willing messenger: the cattle all,
 Our flocks and herds, are with their shepherds slain.
 To Ajax ev'ry tongue imputes the crime;
 One of our spies who saw him on the plain,
 His sword still reeking with fresh blood, confirm'd it:
 Instant I fled to search him, and sometimes
 I trace his footsteps, which again I lose
 I know not how; in happy hour thou com'st
 To aid me, goddess; thy protecting hand
 Hath rul'd me ever, and to thee I trust
 My future fate.

M I N E R V A.

I know it well, Ulysses,
 And therefore came to guard and to assist thee
 Propitious to thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Do I right,
 My much-lov'd mistress?

M I N E R V A.

Doubtless; his foul deed
 Doth well deserve it.

B 2

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

What cou'd prompt his hand
To such a desp'rate act?

M I N E R V A.

Achilles' arms;
His rage for los of them.

U L Y S S E S.

But wherefore thus
Destroy the flock?

M I N E R V A.

'Twas in your blood he thought
His hands were stain'd

U L Y S S E S.

Against the Græcians then
Was all his wrath?

M I N E R V A.

And fatal had it prov'd
To them, if I had not prevented it.

U L Y S S E S.

What daring insolence cou'd move his soul
To such a deed?

M I N E R V A.

Alone by night he wander'd
In secret to attack you.

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

Did he come

Close to our tents?

M I N E R V A.

Ev'n to the double portal,

Where rest your chiefs.

U L Y S S E S.

What pow'r cou'd then withhold

His madd'ning hand?

M I N E R V A.

I purposely deceiv'd

His fight, and fav'd him from the guilty joy,

Turning his rage against the mingled flocks,

Your gather'd spoil; on these with violence

He rush'd, and slaughter'd many; now he thought

That he had slain th' Atridæ, now believ'd

Some other chiefs had perish'd by his hand.

I saw his madness and still urg'd him on,

That he might fall into the snare I laid:

Tired with his slaughter now he binds in chains

The living victim, drives the captive herd

Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men:

There

There beats with many a stripe the helpless foe.
 But I will shew thee this most glaring phrenzy,
 That to the Græcians what thy eyes beheld
 Thou may'st report: be confident, nor fear
 His utmost malice; I shall turn his sight
 Askant from thee. Ajax, what hol come forth,
 Thou who dost bind in chains thy captive foes,
 Ajax, I say, come forth before the portal.

U L Y S S E S.

What woud'st thou do, Minerva? Do not call him.

M I N E R V A.

What shou'd Ulysses fear?

U L Y S S E S.

O! by the Gods

I do intreat thee, let him stay within.

M I N E R V A.

But wherefore? Thou hast seen him here before.

U L Y S S E S.

There beats with many a Stripe, &c. In allusion to this circumstance, the title of the play in the original is *Aias Μασιγοφορος*, or, Ajax the whip-bearer; so call'd either by Sophocles himself, or some of the antient commentators, to distinguish it from Ajax the Locrian, another tragedy written by him, but now lost. As the appellation of whip-bearer, however happily adapted to an Attic, might not so well suit the delicacy of an English ear, I have taken the liberty to sink it upon my readers, who, I apprehend, will be content with the title of Ajax only. Mr. Brumoy for the same reason has omitted it, and calls it, in his translation, *Ajax furieux*.

U L Y S S E S.

He ever was, and is my deadliest foe.

M I N E R V A.

O! but to laugh an enemy to scorn
Is mirth most grateful.

U L Y S S E S.

I had rather still

He come not here.

M I N E R V A.

And art thou then afraid

To see a madman?

U L Y S S E S.

I shou'd little dread

The fight of Ajax in his better mind.

M I N E R V A.

He will not see thee be thou e'er so near.

U L Y S S E S.

Impossible! his eyes are still the same.

M I N E R V A.

But I shall throw a veil of darkness o'er them.

U L Y S S E S.

By pow'rs immortal all things may be done.

M I N E R V A.

Wait then in silence till he come.

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

I will ;

And yet 'twere better to retire.

M I N E R V A.

What ho !

Ajax, again I call thee, wherefore pay'st thou
So little rev'ence to thy guardian pow'r ?

S C E N E II.

A J A X, M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

A J A X.

Hail to the daughter of great Jove ! to thee,
Minerva, hail ! thou com'st in happy hour,
For I will crown thee with the golden spoils
Which I have gain'd by thy assisting hand.

M I N E R V A.

'Twere better to retire, &c. Sophocles has closely copied his great master, Homer, in the character of Ulysses, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumspection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generosity. He is extremely loth, we may observe, to trust himself with Ajax, even though he had a goddess to protect him. I had rather, says he, after all, be a little farther off. Hic (says Camerarius in a note on this passage) est timor prudentiæ, this is but a prudent fear, for who would wish to meet a madman ? Brumoy, however, is of another opinion ; il me paroît (says he) un peu lâche, & J'avoue que ce trait n'est pas à la louange d'Ulysse ni de Sophocle ; mais le roi d'Ithaque étoit trop connu pour le déguiser aux spectateurs, & les idées de prudence & de bravoure étoient alors bien différentes de celles d'aujourd'hui. To say the truth, prudence amongst the antients seems to have favour'd a little of cowardice, as their courage and valour border'd rather too closely on savageness and brutality.

M I N E R V A.

Well haft thou spoke; but fay, has Ajax dip'd
His fpear in Græcian blood?

A J A X.

It is my boaft;

I'll not deny it.

M I N E R V A.

Did th' Atridæ feel
Thy vengeful arm?

A J A X.

They never will again

Difhonour Ajax.

M I N E R V A.

If I underftand thee,
They are both dead.

A J A X.

They are; now let 'em come,
And take my arms away.

M I N E R V A.

But tell me, Ajax;
Laertes' fon, hath he efcap'd thy wrath?

A J A X.

Talk'ft thou of him, that fox accurs'd?

C

M I N E R V A.

A J A X.

M I N E R V A.

I mean

Thy foe, Ulyffes.

A J A X.

O! he is my captive,
The faireft of my fpoils, I have him here;
He fhall not perifh yet.

M I N E R V A.

What 'vantage then
Mean'ft thou to draw from his confinement?

A J A X.

Firft,

I'll have him bound to th' pillar.

M I N E R V A.

And, what then
Wou'dft thou inflict?

A J A X.

His limbs all purpled o'er
With many a bloody ftripe; he fhall be flain.

M I N E R V A.

Do not torment him thus.

A J A X.

In all things elfe,
Minerva, wou'd I gratify thy will,
But this, and this alone muft be his fate.

M I N E R V A.

M I N E R V A.

Since 'tis so pleasing to thee, be it so,
Nor quit thy purpose.

A J A X.

I must to my work ;
Thus, great Minerva, may'st thou ever smile
Propitious on me, and assist thy Ajax.

[Exit.

S C E N E III.

M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

M I N E R V A.

Behold, Ulysses, here the mighty strength
Of pow'r divine: liv'd there a man more wise,
More fam'd for noble deeds than Ajax was?

U L Y S S E S.

None, none indeed; alas! I pity him;
Ev'n in a foe I pity such distress,
For he is wedded to the worst of woes:
His hapless state reminds me of my own,

C 2

And

Since 'tis so pleasing to thee. The Greek is, επειδη σοι τεραψις, which literally translated, answers to our phrase, since it is thy pleasure: but this is generally made use of by us from an inferior to a superior, and consequently would be improper from Minerva to Ajax, where it is the direct contrary: she only means to say, since it gives thee such extraordinary delight and satisfaction; which sense I have endeavour'd to express as concisely as possible in the translation.

And tells me that frail mortals are no more
Than a vain image and an empty shade.

M I N E R V A.

Let such examples teach thee to beware
Against the Gods thou utter aught profane:
And if perchance in riches or in pow'r
Thou shin'st superior, be not insolent;
For, know, a day sufficeth to exalt
Or to depress the state of mortal man:
The wise and good are by the Gods belov'd,
But those, who practice evil, they abhor.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

I.

To thee, O! Ajax, valiant son
Of illustrious Telamon,

Monarch

To thee, O! Ajax. The chorus is form'd, with great propriety, of Salaminian soldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who having heard the report, already spread through the army, of Ajax's madness, and the slaughter of the cattle, express the deepest concern for their unhappy master. If the fact asserted was true, such, say they, was the will of the gods who had deprived him of his senses; he is therefore to be pitied, not condemn'd: if, (as they are rather inclined to believe) it was only a story invented by the artful Ulysses, on purpose to calumniate him, it behoved the hero immediately to appear, and contradict it: of this, interspersed with moral reflections, consists the first chorus, which according to the commentators was, a song between the acts; the French call it, intermede: the chorus before us is made up, in the original, of anapæsts, with a strophe, antistrophe, and epode: I have thrown the whole into one irregular ode of eight stanzas, and divided them as the change of sentiment seem'd to point out and direct me; whether it be done properly must be left to the determination of the reader.

Monarch of the sea-girt isle,
 Fair Salamis, if fortune smile
 On thee, I raise the tributary song,
 For praise and virtue still to thee belong :
 But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove,
 Græcian slander blasts thy fame,
 And foul reproach attaints thy name,
 Then do I tremble like the fearful dove.

II.

So, the last unhappy night,
 Clamours loud did reach mine ear
 And fill'd my anxious heart with fear,
 Which talk'd of Græcian cattle slain,
 And Ajax madd'ning o'er the plain,
 Pleas'd at his prey, rejoycing at the fight.

III.

Thus false Ulysses can prevail,
 Whisp'ring to all his artful tale,
 His tale alas! too willingly receiv'd ;

Whilst

If fortune smile. The original is *σε μεν ευ πρασσουντ'*, quando bene tecum agitur : so we say a man *does well*, when he succeeds in the world.

Last unhappy night. Gr. *της φθιμενης νυκτος*, the night that is perish'd ; a remarkable Greek idiom.

Whilst those who hear are glad to know
 And happy to insult thy woe,
 For, who asperse the great are easily believ'd.

IV.

The poor, like us, alone are free
 From the darts of calumny,
 Whilst envy still attends on high estate:
 Small is the aid which we can lend,
 Without the rich and pow'rful friend;
 The great support the low, the low assist the great.
 But 'tis a truth which fools will never know;
 From such alone the clamours came
 Which strove to hurt thy spotless fame,
 Whilst we can only weep, and not relieve thy woe.

V.

Happy to 'scape thy piercing sight,
 Behold them wing their rapid flight,
 As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly,
 Sudden again shou'dst thou appear,
 The cowards wou'd be mute with fear
 And all their censures in a moment dye.

VI.

Cynthia, goddess of the grove,
 Daughter of immortal Jove,

To whom at Tauris frequent altars rise,
 Indignant might inspire the deed,
 And bid the guiltless cattle bleed,
 Depriv'd of incense due, and wonted sacrifice.
 Perhaps, sad cause of all our grief and shame!
 The god of war with brazen shield,
 For fancy'd inj'ries in the field,
 Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name.

VII.

For never in his perfect mind,
 Had Ajax been to ill inclin'd,
 On flocks and herds his rage had never spent;
 It was inflicted from above:
 May Phœbus and all-powerful Jove
 Avert the crime, or stop the punishment!
 If to th' Atridæ the bold fiction came
 From Sisyphus' detested race,

No

To whom at Tauris &c. Ταυροπολαν, id est, Taurivagam vocant Dianam (says Camerarius) vel quod in Taurica culta fuerit, vel propter terriculamenta nocturna Hecates, vel nescio quam ob causam, that is, they call Diana Ταυροπολα, either because she was worship'd at Tauris, or because of the nocturnal incantations of Hecate, or for I know not what reason (which by the bye is an excellent way of solving the difficulty); the first reason however is most probably the true one, which I have therefore adopted in the translation.

From Sisyphus' detested race. Or, in other words, from Ulysses, whom the chorus means to reproach as the bastard son of Sisyphus; concerning which
 circumstance

No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy fame.

VIII.

Ajax, thy too long repose
Adds new vigor to thy foes,
As flames from aiding winds still fiercer grow;
Whilst the loose laugh, and shameless lye,
And all their bitter calumny,
With double weight oppress, and fill our hearts with woe.

circumstance, the antients, who had perhaps as well as ourselves a little taste for scandal, tell the following tale; Anticlea, the mother of Ulysses, in her journey towards her betroth'd husband, Laertes, was violently seized on by Sisyphus, king of Corinth, and deflower'd by him. Ulysses was supposed to have been the fruit of this stolen embrace, though Laertes, who afterwards marry'd the lady, was obliged to educate him as his own. There is likewise another story, to be met with in the scholia, of her being prostituted to Sisyphus by her father Autolycus. Both Æschylus and Euripides mention the bastardy of Ulysses; Sophocles also repeats it in the Philoctetes.

End of A C T I.

A C T

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

SONS of Eretheus, of Athenian race,
 Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax,
 Oppress'd with grief behold a wretched woman
 Far from her native soil appointed here
 To watch your hapless lord, and mourn his fate.

CHORUS.

What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?
 Say, daughter of Teleutas, for with thee

E

His

Sons of Eretheus &c. The Athenians, who were remarkably proud of their antiquity, filed themselves, *χθονιοι* or *αυτοχθονιοι*, as sprung from the Earth; the original natives of that spot, and coeval with the soil they inhabited. Eretheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcan, and the Earth; from him the Athenians boasted their descent, and they could not well go higher: Salamis was not far from Athens; Sophocles therefore salutes the followers of Ajax by the name of Athenians, and takes this opportunity to indulge the vanity of his countrymen, by calling them the sons of Eretheus; for joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer;

With these appear the Salaminian bands,
 Whom the gigantic Telamon commands;
 In twelve black ships, to Troy they steer their course,
 And with the great Athenians join their force.

POPE'S Homer, B. 2. L. 670.

Daughter of Teleutas &c. Tecmessa, who is here introduced as the wife of Ajax, fell to him, as Briseis to Achilles, by the fate of war: her father,
 Teleutas,

His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns
To share the nuptial bed, and therefore thou
Can'st best inform us.

T E C M E S S A.

How shall I declare
Sadder than death th' unutterable woe!
This night, with madness seiz'd, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed; within thou may'st behold
The tents o'erspread with bloody carcases
Of cattle slain, the victims of his rage.

C H O R U S.

Sad news indeed thou bring'st of that brave man,
A dire disease! and not by human aid
To be remov'd; already Greece hath heard
And wond'ring crouds repeat the dreadful tale:
Alas! I fear th' event! I fear me much,

Left

Teleutas, was a petty king in Phrygia, whose dominions being taken and plunder'd by Ajax, the daughter became his captive, and was afterwards advanced to his bed, in quality, we may suppose, of his chief sultana; by her, we find, he had a child whom the father named Euryfaces, from *εὐρύς σάκος*, a broad shield, in memory of that part of his own armour, by which, as we before observed, he was so eminently distinguish'd; this child is afterwards brought on the stage, a circumstance artfully introduced by the poet, to heighten the distress of the piece. Horace, in his catalogue of famous mistresses, has not forgot our heroine,

Movit Ajacem Telamone natum,
Forma captivæ dominum Tecmessæ.

Lib. 2. Od. 4.

Left with their flocks and herds the shepherds slain,
Against himself he lift his murth'rous hand.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! this way he led his captive spoils,
And some he flew, and others tore in funder;
From out the flock two rams of silver hue
He chose, from one the head and tongue divided,
He cast them from him; then the other chain'd
Fast to the pillar, with a doubled rein
Bore cruel stripes, and bitt'rest execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inspired
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

C H O R U S.

Now then, my friends, (for so the time demands)
Each o'er his head shou'd cast the mournful veil,
And instant fly, or to our ships repair,
And sail with speed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridæ; death may be our lot,
And we shall meet an equal punishment
With him whom we lament, our frantic lord.

T E C M E S S A.

He raves not now; but like the southern blast,
When lightnings cease and all the storm is o'er,
Grows calm again; yet to his sense restor'd,

He feels new griefs; for, O! to be unhappy,
 And know ourselves alone the guilty cause
 Of all our sorrows, is the worst of woes.

C H O R U S.

Yet if his rage subside we shou'd rejoice;
 The ill remov'd, we shou'd remove our care.

T E C M E S S A.

Hadst thou then rather, if the choice were giv'n,
 Thyself at ease, behold thy friend in pain,
 Than with thy friend be join'd in mutual sorrow?

C H O R U S.

The double grief is sure the most oppressive.

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore, tho' not distemper'd, I am wretched.

C H O R U S.

I understand thee not.

T E C M E S S A.

The noble Ajax,
 Whilst he was mad, was happy in his phrenzy,
 And yet the while affected me with grief
 Who was not so; but now his rage is o'er,
 And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
 Himself is almost dead with grief, and I
 Not less unhappy than I was before;
 Is it not doubled then?

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

It is indeed;

And much I fear the wrath of angry heav'n,
If from his madness ceas'd he yet receive
No kind relief.

T E C M E S S A.

'Tis so; and 'twere most fit
You knew it well.

C H O R U S.

Say then how it began;
For like thyself we feel for his misfortunes.

T E C M E S S A.

Since you partake the sorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all: know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening tapers were expir'd,
Snatching his sword, he seem'd as if he meant
To roam abroad, I saw and chid him for it;
What woud'st thou do, I cry'd, my dearest Ajax?
Unask'd, uncall'd for, whither woud'st thou go?
No trumpet sounds to battle, the whole host
Is wrap'd in sleep; then did he answer me
With brief but sharp rebuke, as he was wont;
(Woman, thy sex's noblest ornament)
Is silence; thus reprov'd, I said no more;

Then

Then forth he rush'd alone, where, and for what,
 I knew not; but returning, he brought home
 In chains the captive herd, in pieces some
 He tore, whilst others bound like slaves he lash'd
 Indignant; then out at the portal ran,
 And with some shadow seem'd to hold discourse;
 Against th' Atridæ, and Ulysses oft
 Wou'd he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice
 That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs;
 Then back he came; at length, by slow degrees,
 His phrenzy ceas'd; when soon as he beheld
 The tents o'erwhelm'd with slaughter, he cry'd out,
 And beat his brain; roll'd o'er the bloody heaps
 Of cattle slain, and tore his clotted hair,
 Long fix'd in silence: then, with horrid threats
 He bad me tell him all that had befall'n,
 And what he had been doing; I obey'd,
 Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.
 Instant he pour'd forth bitt'rest lamentations,
 Such as I ne'er had heard from him before,

For

With some shadow &c. This alludes to his conversation with Minerva, in the first act; Tecmessa, we may suppose, was in a chamber adjoining to them, and overheard their discourse. But as Minerva had render'd both herself and Ulysses invisible, Tecmessa could not imagine whom he was talking to; she adds this circumstance therefore to the other symptoms of his madness. There is a passage not unlike this in Hamlet. See Act 3. Sc. 10.

For grief like that, he oft wou'd fay, betray'd
 A weak and little mind, and therefore ever
 When sorrow came, refrain'd from loud complaint,
 And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourn'd.
 But sinking now beneath this sore distress,
 He will not taste of food or nourishment;
 Silent he sits, amid the slaughter'd cattle,
 Or, if he speaks, utters such dreadful words
 As shew a mind intent on something ill.
 Now then, my friends, for therefore came I hither,
 O! if ye have the pow'r assist me now;
 Perhaps ye may; for oft th' afflicted man
 Will listen to the counsels of a friend.

C H O R U S.

O! daughter of Teleutas, horrible
 Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,
 Thus raving, and thus miserable.

[A J A X within groans]

Oh!

T E C M E S S A.

He will not taste of food. The abstinence of Ajax on this occasion, which, we may imagine, was not peculiar to himself, seems to be among those customs which the Grecians borrow'd from the eastern nations: we read in scripture, that when David was afflicted for the loss of his child, he would not eat bread, nor drink wine; it appears from this, and many other passages in Sophocles, that he was no stranger to the manners and phraseology of the orientals; though I would not, on this occasion, venture to affirm, that David and Sophocles were but one person, in imitation of my learned predecessor, Dupont, who so positively asserted, that Homer and Solomon were the same.

A J A X.

T E C M E S S A.

Louder you'll hear him soon; mark'd ye, my friends,
How deep his groans?

A J A X within.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

He seems to rave,
Or mourns reflecting on his madness past.

A J A X within.

Boy, boy!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! he calls Euryfaces,
Where art thou, child? What wou'd he have with thee?

A J A X within.

Teucer, 'tis thee I call, where art thou, Teucer?
Still must he chace his prey, whilst Ajax dyes?

C H O R U S.

He seems of perfect mind—open the doors,
Let him come forth, who knows but fight of us
May keep him so.

T E C M E S S A.

I'll open them——now see

[The doors are thrown open, and Ajax discover'd]
Your master there, and judge of his condition.

S C E N E

S C E N E II.

A J A X, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

A J A X.

My dear companions, who alone deserve
The name of friends, ye see the dreadful storm
How it o'erwhelms me.

C H O R U S. [afide to T E C M E S S A.]

What thou said'st, alas!

Was but too true, he seems indeed distracted.

A J A X.

My fellow-sailors! whose assisting hand
Ply'd the tough oar, and led me thro' the main,
From you alone can I expect to meet

E *

Or

My dear companions, &c. From line 347 to line 427 of the original, instead of the common metre, it is all strophe and antistrophe, which was most probably set to music and sung in the manner of the chorus: this was often done by Sophocles and the other tragic writers in the more pathetic and impassion'd parts of the drama, and met, as we may imagine, with a favourable reception in the Grecian theatre; but as question and answer put into ode or rhyme would have a different effect amongst us, I have preserved the blank verse in this and some other parallel passages, as more proper for dialogue.

Seems indeed distracted. Ajax is here represented as sitting alone in his tent just recover'd from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it: what the chorus here observes concerning his distraction doth not therefore proceed from any thing which he says, but, probably, from a wildness in his looks and gesture which still remain'd, and induced them to believe that his distemper was not quite removed. Ajax, indeed, as Brumoy observes, seems throughout this whole scene like the sea after a storm, whose waves are still agitated, and subsiding by degrees into calmness and tranquillity.

Or love or friendship; therefore shew it now,
And kill me.

C H O R U S.

Talk not thus, nor thus increase
By added woes thy dreadful malady.

A J A X.

Dost thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for strength renown'd
And dauntless courage in the bloody field,
Dost thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach must he sustain?

T E C M E S S A.

O Ajax,
My lord, my master, do not talk thus sadly.

A J A X to T E C M E S S A.

Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be gone?

T E C M E S S A.

Oh me!

C H O R U S.

Be patient; by the Gods let me intreat you.
Be more compos'd.

A J A X.

Wilt thou not home, &c. The mind of Ajax is so disturb'd that he returns the tenderness of his wife with peevishness and anger. I have endeavour'd in the translation to render it with that brevity and sharpness which passion generally makes use of. The ladies may observe the modesty of Tecmessa's behaviour; she answers him only with a sigh.

A J A X.

Wretch that I was, to let
The curst Attidæ scape, and shed the blood
Of harmless cattle!

C H O R U S.

But why sorrow thus
For what is past, and cannot be recall'd?

A J A X.

How will that subtle instrument of ill,
Laertes' prying son, insult me now,
And smile at my misfortunes!

C H O R U S.

That must be
As seems most fitting to the Gods; from them
Or grief or joy must flow.

A J A X.

O wou'd to heav'n
That I cou'd see him! wretched as I am!

C H O R U S.

This is no time for boasting: see'st thou not
How very weak thou art?

A J A X.

Almighty Jove,

E* 2

My

My great progenitor! O grant me this!
 Grant me to slay that hateful, talking slave,
 With the proud princes; then well pleas'd myself
 Shou'd perish last.

T E C M E S S A.

O! if thou pray'ft for death,
 Pray too for mine; for wherefore shou'd I live
 When thou art gone?

A J A X.

O darknefs, my best light
 And hope! O wrap me in your friendly shade
 A willing gueft! I dare not look for help,
 Or from the Gods above, or men below:
 The pow'rful daughter of eternal Jove
 To death devotes me: whither can I fly,
 Or where remain, my fame and glory loft
 In this sad phrenzy? left without a friend,
 And the whole army bent on my destruction!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear fuch words,
 Which Ajax never wou'd have spoke before!

A J A X.

Jove, my great progenitor! Ajax's genealogical table stands thus: Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Jupiter therefore was his great grandfather.

A J A X.

Ye well-known floods that roll into the main,
 Ye caves and forests by the rocky shore!
 Years heap'd on Years fast by the walls of Troy
 Have ye detain'd me, but no longer now
 Amongst the living shall ye ever see
 The hapless Ajax; this remember all:
 Nor shall thy neighb'ring waves, Scamander, still
 To Greece beneficent, behold me more:
 Troy never saw, forgive the boastful word,
 A braver, nobler foe than Ajax was,
 Tho' now dishonour'd thus, and thus oppress'd.

C H O R U S.

I wou'd not have thee thus lament thy woes,
 And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,
 So hard thy lot.

A J A X.

Who wou'd have thought my name
 Wou'd e'er so well have suited my condition!

O

Who wou'd have thought my name, &c. To know the meaning of this passage, the reader should understand Greek; it being nothing more than a poor pun on the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with *ai*, an exclamation like our Oh! expressive of pain and sorrow. It is, to say the truth, not very worthy of Sophocles, and much of a piece with Shakespear's,

—————This is Rome indeed,
 And room enough.

JUL. CÆSAR.

But

O! I have reason to lament indeed,
 For sure there is not such a wretch as Ajax!
 Long since at Troy my valiant father fought,
 And to his native land with glory crown'd
 Bore back the meed of his distinguish'd virtues:
 Nor less renown'd for gallant deeds was once
 His hapless son, tho' now he perish thus
 Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know,
 Were he alive, and to bestow his arms
 On him who best deserv'd the prize, to me
 And me alone wou'd judge the great reward:
 But little deem'd th' Atridæ worth like mine,
 And therefore gave them to that vile impostor,
 Author of ev'ry evil work, Ulysses.

Had not my mind been wrought on by some pow'r
 Superior, and my eyes averted from them,
 They had not liv'd to give another sentence;
 But Jove's great daughter, the invincible,
 The dreadful Pallas, turn'd my arm aside,
 Just rais'd against them, and inspir'd me thus
 With horrid rage to dip my murth'rous hand
 In blood of guiltless cattle: they mean time

Smile

But our Author is not often guilty of this, and should therefore be pardon'd for it. Ovid, who loved trifling, has also play'd upon the name of Ajax. See Met. Lib. 13.

Lament. Another pun; the word *αιαλεω* signifying to lament.

Smile at the danger scap'd, and triumph o'er me.
But when the Gods oppose us, valour bends
To cowardice, and strength to weakness yields:
What then can Ajax? hateful to the Gods,
By Troy detested, and by Greece forsaken?
Shall I go leave the Atridæ here alone
To fight their cause, and seek my native land?
But how shall I appear before my father?
How will he bear to see his Ajax thus
Spoil'd of his honours! he who ever crown'd
With glory fits; it must not, can not be.
What if I rush amid the Trojan host,
And with my single arm oppose them all,
Do something noble, and as nobly perish?
But that wou'd please th' Atridæ, therefore never
Shall it be done: No. I will do a deed
To shew my father that I still deserve
The name of son, and emulate my fire:
When life but teems with unremitted woes,
'Tis poor in man to wish a longer date:
For what can day on day, and year on year
But put off wish'd-for death, and lengthen pain?
Of little worth is he who still depends
On fruitless hope; for it becomes the brave

To live with honour, or to die with glory.
Ye have my thoughts.

C H O R U S.

Thoughts not unworthy of thee,
Ajax; but quit, O! quit thy horrid purpose,
And yield thee to thy friends.

T E C M E S S A.

My lord, my master,
My dearest Ajax, dreadful are the ills
Which cruel fortune brings on human kind:
Of noblest race (a better Phrygia boasts not)
Tecmeffa was, and from a father sprung
Happy and free, tho' now a wretched slave;
For so the Gods and thy all-conq'ring arm
Decreed: but since partaker of thy bed,
Thou know'st I ever have with tend'rest care
Watch'd o'er thee: therefore, by domestic Jove,
Here I intreat thee, by the sacred tye
That binds us, let me not with foul reproach

And

My lord, my master, &c. This speech of Tecmeffa's has been deservedly applauded by the critics as one of the most masterly and pathetic in the whole tragedy. Ce ne font pas (says Brumoy) de ces sentimens delicats & recherchéz qu'on a mis depuis à la mode sur le théâtre; ce sont les expressions vives de l'amitié conjugale. This scene, as well as that which follows between Ajax and his son, is manifestly imitated from the parting of Hector and Andromache in the 6th book of Homer's Iliad, to which I refer my readers. The copy is not, perhaps, much inferior to the original.

And bitter scorn be taunted by thy foes,
 When they furround me, as I know they will:
 For O! when thou shalt die, that very day
 The Greeks with violence will seize on me;
 Tecmessa then and thy lov'd son shall eat
 The bread of slav'ry; then some haughty lord
 Insulting loud, shall cry, behold the wife
 Of Ajax, once the pride of all our host,
 How is she fall'n! from envy'd happiness
 To servitude and woe! such vile upbraidings
 Oft shall I hear, on thee and on thy race
 Casting foul shame: O! then relent, my Ajax;
 Think on thy father in the vale of years,
 Think on thy aged mother, who with vows
 Incessant prays the Gods to send thee back
 Safe to thy native land: pity thy son,
 Without a father in his tender youth
 To form his mind, left to th' unfriendly hands
 Of those who love him not: Alas! what woes
 Wilt thou bequeath to me and to thy child!
 I have no hope, no stay but thee alone.
 Thy hand destroy'd my country, and my mother;

F

Death

The bread of slav'ry. This is literally translated; the expression is much in the style of the scriptures, where we meet with the bread of sorrow, the bread of wickedness, the bread of sincerity, and the like.

Death snatch'd my father to the realms below ;
 Depriv'd of thee what country will receive me,
 Or where shall I subsist? Thou art my all,
 My only safe-guard: do not, do not leave me!
 Nought so becomes a man as gratitude
 For good receiv'd, and noble deeds are still
 The offspring of benevolence, whilst he
 With whom remembrance dies of blessings past
 Is vile and worthless.

C H O R U S.

O! that thou cou'dst feel
 Pity like mine for this unhappy woman!
 Then wou'dst thou say her words deserve thy praise.

A J A X.

And prais'd she shall be if she but perform
 What I require.

T E C M E S S A.

In all will I obey thee,
 My dearest Ajax!

A J A X.

I wou'd see my child;
 Let him be brought.

T E C M E S S A.

I hid him from thy sight
 Because of——

A J A X.

A J A X.

My diftemper, was it not?

T E C M E S S A.

It was: I fear'd indeed thou might'ft deftroy him:

A J A X.

And well thou might'ft: a deed like that became
My fad condition.

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore to prevent it

I kept him from thee.

A J A X.

I approve thy caution.

T E C M E S S A.

What wou'dft thou have me do?

A J A X.

Let me behold

And fpeak to him.

T E C M E S S A.

He is not far from hence,

The fervants have him in their care.

A J A X.

Then why

May I not fee him?

F 2

T E C M E S S A.

A J A X.

T E C M E S S A.

Boy! thy father calls thee:

Let some one bring him hither.

A J A X.

Is he coming,

Or doth not hear thee?

T E C M E S S A.

They have brought him to thee.

[Enter servant with EURYSACES.]

S C E N E III.

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

A J A X.

Bring him this way: for if he be the son
 Of Ajax, the fresh blood that hangs about me
 Will not affright him; he must learn like me
 In earliest years the savage laws of war,
 And be inur'd to scenes of death and slaughter:
 May'st thou, my boy, be happier than thy father!
 In all things else it will be no disgrace
 To copy me: I envy thee, my child,
 For that thou see'st not thy own wretchedness;
 The happiness of life is not to know.
 Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain,
 Till time shall teach thee what it is to grieve

And

And to rejoice ; then must thou shew thy foes
 From whom thou art descended : may the breath
 Of life mean time nourish thy tender frame,
 That thou may'st prove a comfort to thy mother !
 I know there's not a Grecian that will dare
 Insult thee, when thy father is no more ;
 For I shall leave thee to the best of guardians,
 The faithful Teucer, who far from thee now
 Sent forth by Greece repels th' invading foe.
 Of you, my friends, companions of the war,
 The only boon I ask is, that ye urge
 This last request to Teucer, say, I begg'd
 That strait to Telamon and Eriboea,
 My aged parents, he wou'd bear my child,
 To be the joy of their declining years,
 'Till death shall call them to the shades below :
 Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague
 Ulysses, e'er be made the prize of glory
 For rival chiefs : but do thou take, my boy,

[turning to EURYSACES.

The sev'nfold, vast, impenetrable shield
 Whose name thou bear'st ; the rest be bury'd with me.

Take

The rest be bury'd with me. The custom of burying the arms of deceased warriors in the same grave with them is very antient, and is practised amongst the
 Indians

Take hence the child with speed; nor in the tents
 Let there be wailings: Women ever love
 To brood o'er sorrows, and indulge their woe.
 Shut to the door. The wound that must be cut
 No wife physician will attempt to heal
 With incantation, elegy, or song.

C H O R U S.

I tremble when I hear thee threat'ning thus
 With sharp and piercing voice.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! my lord,
 What wilt thou do?

A J A X.

Guess not; inquire not of me;
 Be silent, and be wise; it will become thee.

T E C M E S S A.

How am I tortur'd! by the Gods I beg thee,
 By our dear child, do not destroy us both.

A J A X.

Indians at this day. This whole speech of Ajax, it is observed by the commentators, carries with it the air and form of his last will and testament; he gives orders to his wife and family as a man immediately about to quit the world: this raises the passion of pity in the spectators, and prepares them for the catastrophe.

Incantation, elegy, and song. The Greek word *επωδη* is here used by Sophocles for a charm or incantation, a method of curing diseases frequently made use of by the antients.

A J A X.

Thou dost perplex me ; why revere the Gods ?
I am not bound to't ; for I owe them nothing.

T E C M E S S A.

Be not so impious.

A J A X.

Talk to those will hear thee.

T E C M E S S A.

Art thou resolv'd then ?

A J A X.

'Tis too much ; thy grief

Grows troublesome.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas ! my lord, I fear——

A J A X [to the CHORUS.

Will ye not take her hence ?

T E C M E S S A.

O ! by the Gods

I beg thee be persuaded.

A J A X.

Thou art mad

To think thy words will ever change my purpose. [Exeunt.

O D E.

Change my purpose. Ajax, we must here suppose, breaks from Tecmessa and retires : she goes out, and the chorus remains on the stage to lament their own unhappy condition, and express their fears for Ajax.

A J A X.

O D E.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

O happiest, best abode, my native isle,
 Fair Salamis, encompass'd by the sea,
 On thee whilst Gods and men indulgent smile,
 My country, O behold and pity me!

A long long time on Ida's plain,
 Thus doom'd inglorious to remain,
 While circling years roll o'er my wretched head:
 New terrors still affright me here,
 Still is my heart appall'd with fear,
 Left I shou'd visit soon the mansions of the dead.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

The woes of Ajax too im bitter mine,
 The bravest leader of the Grecian host,
 Untimely visited by wrath divine,
 And in the desp'rate, cruel phrenzy lost.

There was a time when sent by thee
 He gain'd the wreath of victory,
 Tho' now his weeping friends lament his fall:

Th'

Th' ungrateful chiefs revere no more
 The virtues they admir'd before ;
 His gallant deeds are now forgotten all.

S T R O P H E II.

Weigh'd down with years, when thou in hoary age,
 Unhappy mother, shalt these tidings hear
 Of thy dear Ajax, and his cruel rage,
 How wilt thou weep and wail with grief sincere!

Not like the plaintive nightingale
 That warbles sweet her tender tale,
 But with loud shrieks of horrible despair :
 With sharpest anguish sore oppress'd,
 Then shalt thou beat thy aged breast,
 And in deep sorrow rend thy wild dishevell'd hair.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

'Tis better far to die than, hopeless still
 Of cure, to languish under sore disease ;
 When mortals suffer such distinguish'd ill
 The silent tomb is liberty and ease.

Ajax, the pride of all our host,
 His antient fame and glory lost,
 Sinks down at last o'erwhelm'd with foul disgrace :

How will his hapless father bear
 His son's distressful fate to hear,
 Ev'n such as never fell on Æacus his race!

End of A C T II.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

A J A X, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

A J A X.

STILL are the secret things of man reveal'd,
 And what is known, again in darkness hid
 By endless and immeasurable time;
 And nothing is there but in length of days
 May come to pass; ev'n sacred oaths are broken,
 And the fix'd mind perverse and obstinate
 Subdu'd by time: I, who like harden'd steel

Was

Act 3. Brumoy, in opposition to all the critics, translators and commentators, and without assigning any reason, extends this act to the end of the next chorus, and begins the third with the arrival of the messenger from Teucer; which makes the division of the acts very unequal, the second containing, in the original, upwards of five hundred lines, and the third not above one; but, as I observed in the dissertation, the custom of mincing the antient tragedy into five acts is merely arbitrary, and without any foundation, as it was most probably one continued act extending itself through the whole Drama.

Was late inflexible, am soften'd now
 To pity and remorse by this dear woman ;
 I cannot bear to leave her here a widow
 Amidst her foes, or to forsake my child,
 A helpless orphan : No ; I will retire
 Along the shore, and seek the running stream,
 Avert the wrath of angry heav'n, and wash
 My crimes away ; there haply shall I find
 Some unfrequented spot where I may hide
 This fatal weapon, this destructive sword ;
 O ! I will bury't deep in earth, that none
 May see it more, but night and Erebus
 Preserve it still from ev'ry mortal eye :
 E'er since that hapless day, when from the hand
 Of Hector I receiv'd this dreadful boon,
 Nought have I had from Greece but pain and woe :
 True is the adage, " from the hands of foes
 Gifts are not gifts, but injuries most fatal."
 Hereafter will I yield me to the Gods
 And the Atridæ ; since they are my masters,
 'Tis meet that I obey them : all that's strong
 And mighty must submit to pow'rs superior :

G 2

Doth

This fatal weapon. Ajax, who is secretly resolv'd to destroy himself, says this to prevent the suspicions of his wife and friends from his carrying his sword out with him : the spectators plainly see his intent by his industry to conceal it.

Doth not the snowy winter to the bloom
 Of fruitful summer yield? and night obscure,
 When by white steeds Aurora drawn lights up
 The rising day, submissively retire?
 The roaring sea, long vext by angry winds,
 Is lull'd by milder zephyrs to repose,
 And oft the fetters of all-conqu'ring sleep
 Are kindly loos'd to free the captive mind:
 From nature then, who thus instructs mankind,
 Why should not Ajax learn humility?
 Long since I knew to treat my foe like one
 Whom I hereafter as a friend might love
 If he deserved it, and to love my friend
 As if he still might one day be my foe:
 For little is the trust we can repose
 In human friendships: but to my intent;
 Go thou, Tecmessa, and beseech the Gods
 To grant what I request: do you perform
 The same kind office; and when Teucer comes,
 Tell him, the care of me and of my friends
 I leave to him: whither I must, I must:

Obey

Long since I knew, &c. Tully in his *Lælius*, five de *Amicitia*, disclaims this selfish and worldly maxim as destructive of all friendship. The saying is generally attributed to the celebrated Bias, one of the seven sages of Greece.

Obey my orders: wretched as I am
 Soon shall ye see me freed from all my woes. [Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Now let founds of mirth and joy
 Ev'ry blifsful hour employ:
 Borne on pleasure's airy wing
 Io Pan! to thee we sing:
 Thee, whom on the rocky shore
 Wreck-fcap'd mariners adore,
 Skill'd the mazy dance to lead,
 Teach, O! teach our feet to tread
 The round which Cretan Cnoſſus knows,
 At Nyſſa which ſpontaneous roſe;
 Pan, O! guide this tuneful throng,
 While to thee we raiſe the ſong,
 From Cyllene's ſnowy brow,
 King of pleasures, hear us now!

Soon ſhall ye ſee me, &c. The expreſſion, we may obſerve, is ambiguous, and the ſenſe left doubtful on purpoſe to deceive the chorus, who miſunderſtanding him, immediately on his leaving them break out into a ſong of joy on his recovery. This (beſides, as the commentators have remark'd) gives time for Ajax to retire before the arrival of the meſſenger.

From

From thy mountain O! appear!
 Joy and happiness are here:
 And do thou, O! Delian king,
 Now thy aid propitious bring!
 O! from the Icarian sea
 Come, Apollo, smile on me.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

All our sorrows now are o'er,
 Grief and madness are no more:
 See, the happy day appears,
 Mighty Jove! that ends our fears;
 Let us, free from ev'ry care,
 Gladly to our ships repair:
 Ajax now in sweet repose
 Sinks, forgetful of his woes;
 Humbly to the Gods resign'd,
 He devotes his better mind:
 Time, that withers, can restore
 Human pleasures: now no more
 Must we say our vows are vain;
 Nought unhop'd for shou'd remain;
 Since beyond our wishes see
 Ajax from his madness free;

'Gainst

'Gainst th' Atridæ all his rage
 See how milder thoughts affwage,
 Bitter strife and quarrels cease,
 All is harmony and peace.

S C E N E III.

M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

My friends, I bear you news of highest import;
 From Myfia's rocky mountains hither comes
 The noble Teucer; know, ev'n now I saw him
 Amid the Grecian host, who, as he came,
 Surrounded, and on ev'ry side pour'd forth
 Reproaches on him; not a man but cry'd
 Behold the brother of that frantic foe
 To Greece and to her counsels: such their rage
 That they had well-nigh ston'd him; swords were drawn,
 And dire had been the conflict, but that some
 Among the aged chiefs by calm advice
 Appeas'd the strife: but where is Ajax gone?
 That I may tell him: from our masters nought
 Shou'd be conceal'd.

C H O R U S.

He is not now within,

But

But just slept forth, as if on some new act
Intent, well-suited to his better mind.

M E S S E N G E R.

Alas! too late did Teucer fend me here,
Or I am come too slowly.

C H O R U S.

Why regret

His absence thus?

M E S S E N G E R.

'Twas Teucer's strict command
He shou'd be kept within the tent, nor stir
Till he arriv'd.

C H O R U S.

But, to his sense restor'd,
He went to deprecate the wrath divine
And expiate his offence.

M E S S E N G E R.

Thy words are vain,
If Chalcas prophecy aright.

C H O R U S.

What then
Did Chalcas say? Dost thou know aught of this?

M E S S E N G E R.

Thus far I know, for I was witness of it:

Chalcas

Chalcas, retiring from th' assembled chiefs
Apart from the Atridæ, gently prefs'd
The hand of Teucer, and in tend'rest friendship
Besought him that by ev'ry human art
And means to be devis'd, he wou'd prevent
Ajax his wand'ring forth this fatal day,
If he did ever wish to see him more:
This day alone, he said, Minerva's wrath
Wou'd last against him: oft the mighty fall
In deep affliction, smit by angry heav'n,
When mortal-born to human laws they yield not
As mortals ought, submissively: thus spake
The prophet, and long since was Ajax deem'd
To have a mind disturb'd: when first he left
His native soil, be conqu'ror, O! my child,
His father said, but conquer under God;
Impious and proud his answer was; the worst
Of men, he cry'd, assisted by the Gods
May conquer, I shall do the work without them;
Such were his boastings: and when Pallas once
With kind assistance urg'd him to the fight,
Dreadful and horrible was his reply;
Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid,
'Tis needless here; for know, where Ajax is

The foe will never come: by words like these,
 And pride ill-suited to a mortal's pow'r,
 Did he offend the vengeful deity;
 But if he lives, we may preserve him still,
 The Gods assisting; so the prophet spake;
 And Teucer bad me say, you all shou'd try
 To keep him here; but if that cannot be,
 And Chalcas judge aright, he is no more.

C H O R U S. [to TECMESSA within.]

What ho! Tecmeffa! most unhappy woman!
 Come forth and hear the tidings that he brings,
 They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

S C E N E IV.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

Scarce do I breathe from still-repeated woes,
 And now again thou call'st me; wherefore? speak.

C H O R U S.

This messenger hath brought us dreadful news
 Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TECMESSA.

O! what is it?

Am I undone?

MESSENGER.

A J A X.

51

M E S S E N G E R.

I know not what thou art;
But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears
Are great for him.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! he is: but, why?
How thou afflict'st me!

M E S S E N G E R.

Teucer hath forbid
His wand'ring thus alone.

T E C M E S S A.

But why forbid him?
And where is Teucer?

M E S S E N G E R.

He will soon be here:
He fears this fatal day.

T E C M E S S A.

Undone Tecmessa!
Whence are his fears? Who told him 'twou'd be fatal?

M E S S E N G E R.

Thestorian Chalcas did foretel, this day
To life or death wou'd fix the fate of Ajax.

T E C M E S S A. [to the C H O R U S.]

Affist me, friends, in this distressful hour.

To Teucer haste, and bring him to my aid;
 Some to yon western mountain bend your way,
 And some to th' east; find out which path he went:
 Unhappy wand'rer! O! he has deceiv'd me,
 His former love forgotten all and gone!
 What must we do, my child? I must not sit
 Inactive here; no, wherefo'er I can
 I'll go to search him: let us haste, my friends,
 Quick, fly this instant, if we mean to save
 The wretched Ajax rushing on destruction.

C H O R U S.

Behold us ready, not in word alone,
 But bent with speed to follow thee. Away.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T III.

A C T

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

A J A X:

TH E R E stands my sword, and fix'd as it may best
 Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector,
 My worst of foes, whom I detested ever:
 The steel-devouring stone hath sharpen'd well
 Its keenest edge; bury'd in Trojan earth
 It lyes, and now in kindness seems prepar'd
 To end my wretched life; thus far is well:
 And now, O! Jove, for first to thee 'tis fit
 We pay due honours, I address my pray'r;
 I ask not much; I ask thee but to send
 Some passing stranger here to bear the news
 Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear,
 That he may first behold, and take me hence,
 Left by my foes discover'd, I be cast
 A prey to dogs and birds; forbid it, Jove!
 Thee too, great leader of departed souls,
 Terrestrial Hermes, thee I call, O! hear me;
 With easy steps, and swift, conduct me safe
 To my abode, soon as this fatal sword
 Shall reach my breast; and you, ye virgin pow'rs,

From

From whom whate'er befalls of human ill
Cannot be hid, ye goddesses rever'd,
Swift to pursue the guilty, O! behold
The wretched Ajax by th' Atridæ fall!
O! seize the murth'ers! by my own sad hand
As I shall perish, let my foes be slain
By those whom most they love! quick, fly, begone,
Ye vengeful furies, gorge yourselves in blood,
Nor spare a man of all the Grecian host;
And thou, O! sun, who driv'st thy flaming car
Along the vaulted sky, when thou shalt see
My native soil, O! stop thy golden reins;
Tell the sad story to my hapless sire,
And my afflicted mother; when she hears
The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain
To weep my fate: the business must be done.
O! death, look on me, death; I come to thee:
Soon shall we meet, but thee, O! glorious day,
And you bright charioteer the sun, no more
Shall I behold, ev'n now thou hear'st my last
My dying words: O! light, O! sacred soil
Of Salamis, my country, and her gods,
O! noble Athens, O! my lov'd companions,

Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy,
 And you my honour'd parents, O! farewell!
 'Tis the last word Ajax shall speak on earth.
 The rest be utter'd to the shades below.

[AJAX falls on his sword and dies.]

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

Labour on labour! toil on toil! O whither
 Have we not wander'd? yet no place informs us
 Where Ajax is: but soft, I hear a voice.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

'Twas ours, your friends.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

What news?

S E M I C H O R U S II.

We've search'd along

The western shore.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

And is he found?

S E M I-

The Chorus who had been in search of Ajax enter at different parts of the stage, having divided themselves into two parts, the better to discover him; they meet as it were by chance, and ask each other concerning him.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

Alafs!

We met with nought but toil; no fight of him.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

We from the east return with like success;
For none have seen or heard of him that way.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

Who will inform us? who will say
Where cruel Ajax bent his way?
Will not the watchful hind, who void of sleep
Hangs laborious o'er the deep?
From high Olympus will no pitying god,
Will no kind Naiad of the flood,
If chance they see the cruel Ajax stray,
Tell us where he bent his way?
For O! 'tis dreadful weary'd thus to rove,
Whilst all our pains successless prove,
To reach the destin'd goal, or find the man we love.

T E C M E S S A. [from within]

Alafs! alafs!

S E M I C H O R U S I.

Hark! from the neighb'ring grove
I heard a voice.

S E M I-

S E M I C H O R U S I.

It is the wretched captive,
The wife of Ajax, the poor sad Tecmeffa.

S C E N E III.

T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

T E C M E S S A.

O! I am lost, my friends, undone, destroy'd!

C H O R U S.

Ha! what hath happen'd?

T E C M E S S A.

Ajax lies before me,
Slain by the sword which he had bury'd here.

C H O R U S.

Fatal fure was our return,
Thy untimely death to mourn,
Me, and all thy faithful train,
Cruel Ajax, hast thou slain,

I

Sad

O! I am lost, &c. Tecmeffa, as well as the Chorus, alarm'd by the prophecy of Calcas as recounted by the messenger, had been in search of her husband, and on her return stumbles on his body; the Chorus, we must suppose, are at the forepart of the stage, and Tecmeffa at the back, in the place where Ajax had fall'n upon his sword. The Chorus here, agreeable to what I before observed was customary in the impassion'd parts of the drama, sing in strophe and antistrophe: I have therefore put it into rhyme, the better to distinguish it.

Sad event alas! to me!

Sadder, woman, still to thee.

T E C M E S S A.

O! I have reason now to weep indeed.

C H O R U S.

What hand perform'd the horrid deed?

T E C M E S S A.

His own,

Doubtless it was: the sword he fell upon,

Here, fix'd in earth, declares it must be so.

[Approaching towards the body.]

C H O R U S.

Alone without one pitying friend,

Cam'st thou to this dreadful end?

Was I not myself to blame,

Who neglectful never came?

Bring him, Tecmessa, to my eyes,

Tell me, where thy Ajax lies.

T E C M E S S A.

He is not to be seen: this folded garment

Shall hide the horrid sight: a sight no friend

Wou'd wish to see; whilst from his nostrils streams

The black blood, more still issuing from the wound

Made by his own destructive hand: O! me!

What

What must I do? what friend will raise him up:
 O! where is Teucer? he shou'd have been here
 To pay his last sad duty to a brother:
 O! wretched Ajax! but to think, alas!
 What once thou hast been, and what now thou art,
 Thy very foes must sure lament thy fate.

C H O R U S.

Ajax, long since in thy obdurate mind,
 Thy sad purpose was design'd;
 Long since wert thou resolv'd to seek repose,
 From thy never-ceasing woes;
 This from the daily sigh, the nightly tear,
 This from thy sorrows did I fear;
 This from thy hate which nought cou'd e'er assuage;
 And 'gainst th' Atridæ all thy rage:
 For never did thy soul contentment know,
 But still with fiercest indignation glow,
 Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe.

T E C M E S S A.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

Alas! I know the wound must pierce
 Thy inmost soul.

T E C M E S S A.

Unhappy loft Teemeffa!

C H O R U S.

O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy,
Bercav'd of fuch a friend.

T E C M E S S A.

Thou but believ'ft it,
I am too certain; for I feel it here.

C H O R U S.

I know thou doft.

T E C M E S S A.

What fervitude, my child,
Must we endure? who will protect us now?

C H O R U S.

Doubtlefs thy fears of future pain,
From the Atridæ all are vain,
For never can they mean fuch ills to thee;
Unfeeling they of human woe,
Nor love nor piety cou'd know;
May heav'n avert the fad calamity!

T E C M E S S A.

The gods ordain'd it, and it muft be fo.

C H O R U S.

But he hath fuffer'd more than he deferv'd.

T E C-

T E C M E S S A.

Jove's dreadful daughter Pallas so decreed
His fate, to gratify her lov'd Ulyffes.

C H O R U S.

Ulyffes, ever pleas'd to see
His madness, now will smile at thee,
Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine:
By him the curs'd Atridæ led,
Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead,
And in the cruel mirth with pleasure join.

T E C M E S S A.

Let them rejoice, let them insult him now
With savage joy, but when the dreadful day
Of battle comes, whom living they despis'd,
When dead they shall lament: fools never know
The treasure's value, till the treasure's lost:
But far more bitter was his death to me
Than sweet to them: to Ajax 'twas most welcome;
Death was his only wish, and he obtain'd it:
Then wherefore shou'd they triumph? by the hand
Of heav'n, and not by theirs my Ajax fell.
Then let Ulyffes smile: he is not theirs,
He lives not for the Grecians; he is gone,
And has bequeath'd his sorrows all to me.

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

T E U C E R, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Alas! alas!

C H O R U S.

Hark! 'tis the voice of Teucer
In mournful sighs lamenting our sad fate.

T E U C E R.

O! Ajax, is it so? my dearest brother,
Dear as these eyes to me, hath fame said true,
And art thou gone?

C H O R U S.

O! Teucer, he is dead.

T E U C E R.

Unhappy fate!

C H O R U S.

'Tis so indeed.

T E U C E R.

Alas!

Wretch that I am.

C H O R U S.

O! thou hast cause to weep.

T E U C E R

T E U C E R.

Dreadful calamity!

C H O R U S.

It is indeed

Too much to bear.

T E U C E R.

O! wretched, wretched Teucer!

Where is the child? is he at Troy?

C H O R U S.

Alone

And in the tent.

T E U C E R.

Will ye not bring him to me,

Left he shou'd fall a victim to the foe?

Ev'n as the hunters seize the lion's whelp

Left to its helpless dam: quick! fly! assist me,

For all are glad to triumph o'er the dead.

C H O R U S.

To thee, O! Teucer, he bequeath'd the care

Of his lov'd child, and thou obey'ft him well.

T E U C E R.

O Ajax! never did these eyes behold

A fight so dreadful; came I then for this

With luckless speed? O! melancholy journey!

To

To seek thee long in vain, and thus at last
To find thee dead before me, O! my brother!
Quick through the Grecian host, as if some god
Had brought the tidings, spread the dire report
Of thy untimely fate, far from thee then
I heard and wept, but now, alas! I see
And am undone; my best, my dearest Ajax!
Unveil the body; let me view it well,
And count my miseries; horrid spectacle!
O! rash advent'rous deed! what weight of woe
Thy death has laid on me! alas! to whom
Or whither shall I go? O! wherefore, Teucer,
Wert thou not here to stop a brother's hand?
What will our poor unhappy father say,
The wretched Telamon, will he receive me
With looks of love and pleasure, when I come
Without his Ajax? O! he never will.
Ev'n in the best of times he was not wont
To smile, or joy in aught. What then will now
His anger vent? will he not speak of me
As of a faithless base unworthy son,
The spurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betray'd and slain his best-lov'd Ajax
To gain his fair possessions after death?

Thus

Thus will his wrath, sharpen'd by peevish age,
 Upbraid me guiltless; and to slav'ry doom'd
 A wretched exile from his native land
 Shall Teucer wander forth: such dreadful ills
 Must I expect at home: at Troy my foes
 Are num'rous, and my friends alas how few!
 Thou art the cause of all: for O! my Ajax,
 What shall I do? how can I save thee now
 From this sad fate? O! who could have foreseen
 That Hector, long since dead, at last should prove
 The murderer of Ajax? By the gods
 I do beseech you, mark the fate of both:
 The belt, which Ajax did to Hector give,
 Dragg'd the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field
 Till he expir'd; and now behold the sword,
 Which Hector gave to Ajax, is the cause
 Of Ajax' death: Erynnis' self did forge
 The fatal steel, and Pluto made the belt;
 Dreadful artificer! But this, and all
 That happens to us, is the work of heav'n.
 If there be those who doubt it, let them hold
 Their diff'ring judgments, I shall keep my own.

C H O R U S.

Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare
 To bury Ajax, and defend thy self

Against thy foe, whom yonder I behold
 This way advancing, with malignant smile,
 And looks of ill intent.

T E U C E R.

Who can it be?

From th' army, think'st thou?

C H O R U S.

'Tis the man whose cause

We came to fight, ev'n Menelaus.

T E U C E R.

'Tis fo.

As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

S C E N E V.

M E N E L A U S, T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

M E N E L A U S.

Stop there; to thee I speak; let go the body,
 I will not have it touch'd.

T E U C E R.

Why touch it not?

M E N E L A U S.

Because it is my will, and his who leads
 The Grecian host.

T E U C E R.

T E U C E R.

But wherefore is it so?

M E N E L A U S.

Greece fondly hoped that she had brought a friend,
And firm ally, but by experience found
That Troy herself was not so much our foe
As Ajax was, who nightly wander'd forth
With deadliest rage to murder all our host,
And, but some god did frustrate his intent,
The fate himself hath met had been our own;
Then had he triumph'd; but the gods ordain'd
It shou'd not be; and 'gainst the flocks and herds
Turn'd all his fury: wherefore, know, there lives not
A man of courage or of pow'r sufficient
To bury Ajax: on the yellow shore
He shall be cast; to be the food of birds
That wander there: thou may'st resent it too,
But t'will be vain; at least we will command
When dead, whom living we cou'd ne'er subdue,
Nor ask thy leave: he never wou'd submit,
But now he must: yield therefore, or we force thee.
'Tis the Plebeian's duty to obey
The voice of those who bear authority,
And he who doth not is the worst of men;

For never can the state itself support
By wholesome laws, where there is no submission :
An army's best defence is modest fear
And reverence of its leaders, without these
It cannot conquer: it becomes a man
How great foe'er his strength, still to remember
A little, very little, may destroy him.
He who is guarded by humility
And conscious shame, alone in safety lives ;
But where licentious freedom and reproach
Injurious reign, each as his will directs
Still acting, know, that city soon must fall
From all its bliss, and sink in deepest woe.
Remember then, respect is due to me.
Let us not think when pleasure is enjoy'd
We must not suffer too, and taste of pain ;
For these to mortals still alternate rise.
There liv'd not one so proud and arrogant
As Ajax was: I will be haughty now ;
It is my turn: take heed then, touch him not,
Lest, while thou striv'st to bury him, thyself
Shou'd drop into the tomb.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

O! Menelaus,

Do not with maxims grave, and wisdom's rules
Mix foul reproach and slander on the dead.

T E U C E R.

It shou'd not move our wonder, O! my friends,
To see the vulgar err, of meaner souls,
And birth obscure, when men so nobly born
Will talk thus basely: tell me, Menelaus,
For 'twas thy first assertion, didst thou bring
Our Ajax here to help the Grecian host,
Or came he hither by himself alone
Conducted? whence is thy command o'er him,
Or these his followers? who gave thee pow'r,
Who gave thee right? thou may'st be Sparta's king,
But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law
No more to thee than thou wert bound to Ajax;
Thyself no gen'ral, but to others here
Subjected, therefore lord it where thou may'st;
Command thy slaves, go, threaten, and chastise them;
But I will bury Ajax, spite of thee,
And of thy Brother, for I heed thee not:
He fail'd not here to quarrel for the wife
Of Menelaus, like a hireling slave,

But

But to fulfill the strictly-binding oath
 Which he had sworn; he did not come for thee;
 For he despis'd so poor a cause; he came
 With all his heralds, and a num'rous train,
 And brought his captains too; remember therefore
 Thy clamours ne'er shall turn me from my purpose,
 Whilst thou art what thou art.

M E N E L A U S.

A tongue like thine

But ill becomes thy state: 'tis most unseemly.

T E U C E R.

A keen reproach with justice on its side
 Is always grating.

M E N E L A U S.

This proud archer here

Talks loudly.

T E U-

Strictly-binding oath, &c. Tyndarus, the father of the fair Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them soever the happy lot should fall to marry her, the rest should unite in his defence, and, in case of any attempt to carry her off, should join their forces to recover her. The event justify'd the necessity of this oath. Teucer therefore tells Menelaus, that it was not any personal regard to him which induced Ajax to join the army, but his resolution to fulfil this solemn engagement.

This proud archer, &c. The foot-soldiers among the Grecians were divided into the $\psi\lambda\lambda\iota$ and the $\epsilon\tau\lambda\iota\tau\alpha\iota$. The $\epsilon\pi\lambda\iota\tau\alpha\iota$ or armed soldiers, bore heavy armour, engaging with broad shields, and long spears: Whereas the $\psi\lambda\lambda\iota$ or light armed men fought with arrows, and darts, or sometimes stones and slings, annoying their enemies at a distance, like our modern Indians, but unfit for close fight:

T E U C E R.

'Tis no mean illib'ral art.

M E N E L A U S.

If thou could'st bear a shield, how insolent
And haughty woud'st thou be! when naked thus
Thou boast'st thy valour.

T E U C E R.

Naked as I am

I shou'd not fly from thee with all thy arms.

M E N E L A U S.

Thy tongue but speaks thy pride.

T E U C E R.

I shou'd be proud

When I am just.

M E N E L A U S.

Doth justice bid me love

Him who destroy'd me?

T E U C E R.

Art thou then destroy'd?

That's strange indeed, living and dead at once.

M E N E-

fight: these, to which Teucer belonged, were inferior in honour and dignity to the heavy-armed foldiers; Menelaus therefore reproaches him as a man of no rank, alluding probably to the custom among the $\psi\lambda\omicron\iota$ of shooting their arrows, and then retiring behind the shields of the heavy-armed for protection. Homer, whom Sophocles never loses sight of, describes Teucer acting in this manner. See the 8th book of the Iliad.

A J A X.

M E N E L A U S.

For him I had been so: the gods preserv'd me.

T E U C E R.

Do not dishonour then the pow'rs divine
That sav'd thee?

M E N E L A U S.

Do I violate their laws?

T E U C E R.

If thou forbid'st the burial of the dead
Thou dost offend the gods.

M E N E L A U S.

He was my foe,

And therefore I forbid it.

T E U C E R.

Art thou sure

That Ajax ever was thy foe?

M E N E L A U S.

I am:

Our hate was mutual, and thou know'st the cause.

T E U C E R.

Because thou wert corrupted, thy false voice
Condemn'd him.

M E N E-

Thy false voice, &c. The Scholiasts on this place inform us that in the famous contest between Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles, the former lost them by the casting vote of Menelaus.

M E N E L A U S.

'Twas the judges' fault, not mine.

T E U C E R.

Thus may'st thou screen a thousand injuries.

M E N E L A U S.

Some one may suffer for this insolence.

T E U C E R.

Not more perhaps than others.

M E N E L A U S.

This alone

Remember, bury'd he shall never be.

T E U C E R.

Do thou remember too, I say, he shall.

M E N E L A U S.

So have I seen a bold imperious man
 With froward tongue, before the storm began,
 Urging the tardy mariner to fail,
 But when the tempest rose, no more was heard
 The coward's voice, but wrap'd beneath his cloak
 Silent he laid, and suffer'd ev'ry foot
 To trample on him; thus it is with thee,
 And thy foul tongue; forth from a little cloud
 Soon as the storm shall burst, it will o'erwhelm thee,
 And stop thy clamours.

L

T E U-

A J A X.

T E U C E R.

I too have beheld

A man with folly swol'n reproach his friends
 Oppress'd with sore calamity, when strait
 One came like me, with indignation fir'd,
 Saw, and address'd him thus, " cease, shameless wretch,
 " Nor thus oppress the dead; for, if thou dost,
 " Remember thou shalt suffer for thy crime:"
 Thus spake he to the weak insulting fool;
 Methinks I see him here; it must be he,
 Ev'n Menelaus; have I guess'd aright?

M E N E L A U S.

'Tis well; I'll leave thee: 'tis a folly thus
 To talk with those whom we have pow'r to punish.

[Exit.

S C E N E VI.

T E U C E R, C H O R U S:

T E U C E R.

Away, this babbler is not to be borne.

C H O R U S.

Weak insulting fool, &c. There is something in the raillery of this scene which will probably appear very rough, when compared with the refinement of modern manners: The heroes of Sophocles, like those of Homer, are not remarkable for their delicacy. " Il faut convenir (says Brumoy) que les heros " Grecs se traitent un peu à la Grecque, c'est à-dire, assez incivilement; mais " telle étoit la maniere d'une nation d'ailleurs si polie; cela n'est pas pour nous " plaire aujourd'hui."

C H O R U S.

The contest will grow warm: O! Teucer, haste,
 Prepare some hollow fofs for the remains
 Of Ajax, raife him there a monument,
 By after ages ne'er to be forgotten.

T E U C E R.

And, lo! in happy hour this way advancing
 The wife and fon of our unhappy friend,
 To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb:

S C E N E VII.

T E C M E S S A, E U R Y S A C E S,

T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Come hither, boy, bend down and touch thy father;
 There fit, and holding in thy hands this hair
 And hers and thine, the suppliant's humble treasure,
 Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father:
 If from yon hostile camp the foe shou'd come
 To drive thee hence, far from his native land,

L 2

Whoc'er

Holding in thy hands &c. It was customary among the Grecians on the death of friends or relations to tear and cut off their hair to throw it on the dead body, or sometimes into the funeral pile, with a design to render the ghost of the deceased person propitious, as well as to shew their grief for the loss of him: we find Electra performing this ceremony in honour of Orestes whom she supposed dead.

Whoe'er he be, unbury'd may he lye,
 From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
 Ev'n as this hair which here I cut before thee;
 O! guard it well, my child, and you my friends,
 Behave like men, assist, protect him now;
 Till I return, and, spite of all our foes,
 Perform the rites, and raise a tomb to Ajax.

Exit.

S C E N E VIII.

T E C M E S S A, E U R Y S A C E S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

When will the happy hour appear,
 That comes to calm our ev'ry fear,
 From endless toil to bring us sweet repose,
 To bid our weary wandrings cease,
 To fold us in the arms of peace,
 And put the wish'd-for period to our woes?
 For since the day when first to Troy we came,
 Nought have we known but grief, reproach, and shame.

A N T I-

Scene VIII. Menelaus goes out with an intention, we must suppose, to bring back with him a proper force to secure the execution of his orders which Teucer had treated with contempt; Teucer retires to find out a proper place for the interment of Ajax, and leaves Tecmessa and Euryfaces weeping over the body: the Chorus sings a pathetic dirge, lamenting the miseries of war, and their own unhappy condition.

A N T I S R O P H E I.

O! that the man, who erst inspir'd
 With horrid rage, our Grecians fir'd
 To slaughterous deeds, and taught them first to fight,
 E'er he had learn'd the dreadful trade,
 Himself had mingled with the dead,
 Or scatter'd wide in air, or sunk in endless night!
 For O! from war unnumber'd evils flow,
 The inexhausted source of ev'ry human woe.

S T R O P H E II.

By war disturb'd the genial board
 No longer will its sweets afford;
 Their fragrant odours round my head
 The verdant wreaths no longer spread;
 Nor music's charms my soul delight,
 Nor love with rapture crown the night;
 No love alas! for me, but grief and care;
 For when I think of Troy I still despair,
 And wet with many a tear my wild dishevell'd hair.

A N T I S R O P H E II.

Nor nightly fear nor hostile dart
 Whilst Ajax liv'd, appall'd my heart,
 But all our pleasures now are o'er,
 The valiant Ajax is no more:

O cou'd I climb the woody steep
That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat!
Thence shou'd my eye the lovely prospect greet,
And smile on sacred Athens rising at my feet.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

T E U C E R , A G A M E M N O N , C H O R U S .

T E U C E R .

THIS way I bent my hafty steps to meet
The Grecian chief, who hither comes prepar'd
To vent his keen reproaches.

A G A M E M N O N .

I am told

That thou, ev'n thou, the fon of a vile slave,
Hast dar'd to utter foulest calumny
Against thy prince, and pafs'd unpunish'd for it;
Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride
And high demeanor, had thy mother sprung
From noble blood? barbarian as thou art,
How coud'st thou praise a wretch who like thyself
Was nothing? we, it seems, for thou hast sworn it,
Are not the masters or of Greece or thee;

Ajax

Ajax alone, thou say'st, was leader here.
Shall we be thus insulted by our slaves?
Who is this boaster? and what mighty deed
Hath he perform'd which I cou'd not have done?
Is there no Hero in the Grecian host
But Ajax? Vain indeed were our resolves
In the warm contest for Achilles' arms,
If Teucer yet shall question the decree,
Against the gen'ral voice; resisting still,
And still reproachful, with delusive arts
Tho' conquer'd, yet opposing: wholesome laws
Will nought avail, if those whom justice deems
Superior, to the vanquish'd must resign,
And first in virtue be the last in fame;
It must not be; not always the huge size
Of weighty limbs ensures the victory;
They who excel in wisdom are alone
Invincible: thou seest the brawny ox
How the small whip will drive him thro' the field;
What if the medicine be apply'd to thee
For thy proud boasting, and licentious tongue!
T'will be thy portion soon, unless thou learn'st
More wisdom; henceforth, mindful what thou art,
Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead

Thy cause; for know, the language which thou talk'st
Is barb'rous, and I understand thee not.

C H O R U S.

I can but wish that wisdom may attend
To guide you both.

T E U C E R.

Alas! how very soon

Are all the merits of the dead forgotten!
O! Ajax, is the memory of thee
Already lost, ev'n by the man for whom
Thy life so oft was ventur'd in the field!
But now 'tis past, and buried in oblivion:
Thou wordy fland'rer! can'st thou not remember
When baffled and unequal to the foe
Close pent within the walls our forces lay,
Can'st thou not call to mind who came alone
To your deliv'rance, when devouring flames
Tow'r'd o'er our ships, when Hector leap'd the foss
And rush'd amongst us, then who fought for Greece?
Who drove him back but Ajax, who, thou say'st,
Cou'd never fight? did he not fight for you?
He met the noble Hector hand to hand,
Unbidden dared the fortune of the field;
He scorn'd the coward's art to fix his lot

In the moist earth; forth from the crested helmet
It sprang the first: such were the deeds of Ajax,
And I was witness of them; I, the slave,
For so thou call'st me, sprung from a barbarian:
How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth!
Who was thy grandfire? can'st thou not remember
That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops, tell me
Who was thy father, Atreus, was he not?
That worst of men, who at a brother's table
Serv'd up his children, horrible repast!
Thy mother too a Cretan, and a slave;
A vile adultress, whom thy father caught
And head-long cast into the sea: shalt thou
Talk then to me of birth, to me, the son
Of valiant Telamon, renown'd in war,
And wedded to a queen, the royal race
Of great Laomedon, and fairest gift
Of fam'd Alcides? thus of noble blood
From either parent sprung, shall I disgrace
The man whom thou inhuman wou'dst still keep
Unbury'd here? dost thou not blush to think on't?
But, mark me well; if thou dost cast him forth,
Not he alone inglorious on the plain
Shall lye, together we will perish all:

To dye with glory in a brother's cause
 Is better far than fighting for the wife
 Of Agamemnon, or of Menelaus:
 For thy own sake, and not for mine, remember
 If thou provoke me, thou'lt be sorry for it,
 And wish'd thou'dst rather fear'd than anger'd Teucer.

S C E N E II.

U L Y S S E S, A G A M E M N O N, M E N E L A U S,
 T E U C E R, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Ulysses, if thou mean'st not to inflame,
 But to compose this dreadful strife, thou com'st
 In happiest hour.

U L Y S S E S.

Far off I heard the voice
 Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corse;
 Whence rose the clamour, friends?

M E N E L A U S.

With bitterest words
 This Teucer here, Ulysses, has revil'd me.

U L Y S S E S.

What words? for if he heard the same from thee,
 I blame him not.

A J A X.

A G A M E M N O N.

He did provoke me to it.

U L Y S S E S.

What inj'ry hath he done thee?

A G A M E M N O N.

He declares

The body shall have sepulture, himself
 Perforce will bury Ajax, spite of me,
 And of my pow'r.

U L Y S S E S.

Shall I be free, and speak
 The truth to thee without reproach or blame?

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou mayst; for well thou know'st I hold Ulysses
 Of all the Greeks my best and dearest friend.

U L Y S S E S.

Then hear me, by the gods I must intreat thee;
 Do not, remorseless and inhuman, cast
 The body forth unbury'd, nor permit
 Authority to trample thus on justice.
 E'er since our contest for Achilles' arms,
 Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I scorn
 To use him basely; ev'n Ulysses owns
 Of all the Grecian chiefs who came to Troy

(Except

(Except Achilles) Ajax was the bravest.
 Do not deny him then the honours due
 To worth so great; for know, it were a crime
 Not against him alone but 'gainst the gods,
 A violation of the laws divine.
 To hurt the brave and virtuous after death,
 Ev'n tho' he liv'd thy foe, is infamous.

A G A M E M N O N.

Plead'ft thou for Ajax?

U L Y S S E S.

Yes; I was his foe

Whilst justice wou'd permit me; but he's dead;
 Therefore thou shoud'ft not triumph, nor rejoice
 With mirth unseemly o'er a vanquish'd man.

A G A M E M N O N:

'Tis not so easy for a king to act
 By honour's strictest rules.

U L Y S S E S.

'Tis always so,
 To hearken to the counsels of a friend,
 When he advises well.

A G A M E M N O N.

But know, the good

And virtuous still submit to those who rule.

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

No more: when thou art vanquish'd by thy friends,
Thou art thyself the conqu'ror.

A G A M E M N O N.

Still remember

For whom thou plead'st, Ulysses.

U L Y S S E S.

For a foe,

But for a brave one.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou thus revere

Ev'n after death thy enemy?

U L Y S S E S.

I do:

Virtue is dearer to me than revenge.

A G A M E M N O N.

Such men are most unstable in their ways.

U L Y S S E S.

Our dearest friend may one day be our foe.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou desire such friends?

U L Y S S E S.

I cannot love

Or praise th' unfeeling heart.

A G A M E M N O N.

This day shall Greece

Mark us for cowards.

U L Y S S E S.

Greece will call us just.

A G A M E M N O N.

Woud'st thou persuade me then to grant him burial?

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd, and for that purpose came I hither.

A G A M E M N O N.

How ev'ry man consults his own advantage,
And acts but for himself!

U L Y S S E S.

And who is he

Whom I shou'd wish to serve before Ulysses?

A G A M E M N O N.

'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine.

U L Y S S E S.

The deed will win thee praise, and ev'ry tongue
Shall call thee good.

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou know'st I'd not refuse

Ulysses more, much more than this; but Ajax
Or bury'd or unbury'd is the same,

And

And muſt be hateful ſtill to Agamemnon;
But do as it beſeems thee beſt.

C H O R U S.

Ulyſſes,

The man who ſays thou art not wiſe and good
Is ſenſeleſs and unjuſt.

U L Y S S E S.

I tell thee, Teucer,

Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax
As once I was his foe: ev'n now I mean
To join with thee, a fellow-labourer
In all the pious offices of love,
Nor wou'd omit, what ev'ry man ſhou'd pay
The honours due to ſuch exalted virtue!

T E U C E R.

O! beſt of men, thou haſt my thanks and praiſe,
And well deſerv'ſt them, for thou haſt tranſcended
My utmoſt hopes. I little thought the worſt
Of all his foes among the Grecian hoſt
Wou'd thus alone defend, alone protect
The dead from inſult, when theſe thund'ring leaders
United came, to caſt his body forth
With infamy; but may the god who rules
O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful furies,

Daugh-

Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding sisters,
 With all-deciding justice soon repay
 The haughty tyrants: for thy offer'd aid,
 Son of Laertes, in the fun'ral rites,
 Perhaps it might offend the honour'd shade
 Of our dead friend, it cannot be accepted;
 For all beside we thank thee: if thou will'st
 To send assistance from the Grecian camp,
 'Twill be receiv'd; the rest shall be my care.
 Thou hast perform'd the duty of a friend,
 And we acknowledge it.

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd have lent
 My willing aid, but since it must not be,
 I shall submit; farewell. [Exit Ulysses.

S C E N E III.

A G A M E M N O N, M E N E L A U S, T E U C E R,
 E U R Y S A C E S, C H O R U S.

T E U C E R.

Thus far is right;
 The time already past doth chide our sloth:
 My friends, be vigilant; let some prepare
 The hollow fofs, some o'er the sacred flame
 Place the rich tripod for the fun'ral bath;

Forth from the camp a chosen band must bear
His glitt'ring arms, and trophies of the war.

Do thou, my child, if thou hast strength, uplift

[to Euryfaces.

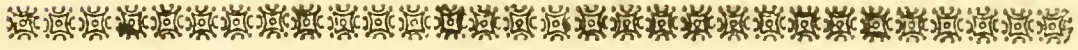
Thy father's body; see, the veins, yet warm,
Spout forth with blood; haste, help, assist me, all
Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me
Your last sad duties to the noble Ajax;
For never was on earth a better man.

C H O R U S.

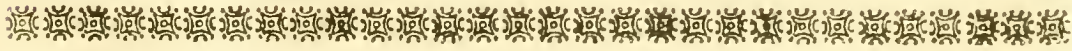
Whate'er of good or ill weak mortals know,
Must from their best of guides, experience, flow;
Seek then no farther; for to man is giv'n
The present state, the future left to heav'n.

Whate'er of good or ill &c. The sentiment in the original is, if I am not mistaken, exactly agreeable to my interpretation, though the Greek carries with it some degree of obscurity; it seems design'd by Sophocles as a kind of moral to the drama; I have therefore taken the liberty more fully to express, and explain it in the translation. For a complete defence and illustration of this play in all its parts, I refer my readers to Hedelin's critique on Ajax, subjoin'd to his pratique du theatre, or, whole art of the stage.

F I N I S.



E L E C T R A .



Dramatis Personæ.

ELECTRA, daughter of AGAMEMNON and CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ORESTES, brother of ELECTRA.

PYLADES, friend of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, wife to ÆGISTHUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, sister of ELECTRA.

ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycenæ.

CHORUS,

Composed of the principal LADIES of MYCENÆ.

SCENE, MYCENÆ, before the palace of ÆGISTHUS.

E L E C T R A.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

ORESTES, PYLADES,
GOVERNOR of ORESTES,
GOVERNOR.

O Son of great Atrides, he who led
Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls,
At length behold what thy desiring eyes
So long have fought, behold thy native foil,
Thy much-lov'd Argos, and the hallow'd grove

O

OF

The scene lies just before the gates of the palace of Ægisthus; on the back part of it is represented a view of the two cities of Argos and Mycenæ, the temple of Juno, and the grove of Io, which must altogether have made a noble and magnificent appearance, as the Greeks spared no expence in the decorations of their theatre. The place of action, the persons, with the whole view and subject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the first scene, with that accuracy, plainness and simplicity, for which Sophocles is so eminently distinguish'd.

The hallow'd grove of Io. Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transform'd into a heifer by Jupiter to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who discover'd and placed her under the guardianship of Argus. She afterwards sent a gad-fly to sting her into madness. The story is told in the first book of Ovid's Metamorph.

Of Io, frantic maid: on this side lies
 The Lycian forum, on the left the fane
 Of Juno far renown'd: behold! we come
 To rich Mycenæ, and the slaughterous house
 Of Pelops' hapless race, from whose sad walls
 Long since I bore thee, at thy sisters hand
 Gladly receiv'd, and with paternal care
 To this blest day have foster'd up thy youth,
 Till riper years shou'd give thee to return,
 And pay with dire revenge thy father's murther.
 Now, my Orestes, and thou dear companion
 Of all our sufferings, much-lov'd Pylades,
 Let deepest counsel sway our just resolves;
 For lo! resplendent Phœbus with his light
 Calls up the chearful birds to early song,

And

The Lycian forum. A place sacred to Apollo *λυκιος* or *λυκοκτονος* the wolf-slayer, so call'd from his killing wolves when under the disguise of a shepherd to Admetus.

The fane of Juno. Between Argos and Mycenæ, which are often mistaken by the tragic poets for the same city, was placed the magnificent temple of Juno. Before the time of Agamemnon they had each a distinct sovereign: he first united and ruled over them both.

The slaughterous house of Pelops. A family which furnish'd ample matter for the tragic poets. The stories, here alluded to, of Tantalus, Pelops, Thyestes, Agamemnon, &c. are too well known to need any illustration.

And gloomy night hath lost her starry train:
 Come then, my friends, and e'er th' awaken'd city
 Pours forth her busy throngs, this instant here
 Let us consult; believe me, 'tis no time
 For dull delay; tis the decisive hour,
 And this the very crisis of our fate.

O R E S T E S.

What proofs thou giv'st me of the noblest nature
 And true benevolence, thou good old man!
 Of servants sure the faithfulest and best
 That ever bore the name: the gen'rous steed,
 Tho' worn with years, thus keeps his wonted courage,
 And warns his master of approaching danger;
 Like him thou stirr'st me up to noble deeds,
 And follow'st me undaunted: but attend
 To what I have resolv'd, and if I err,
 Let thy superior judgment set me right.

When to the delphic oracle I flew,
 Eager to know how on my father's foes
 I best might satiate my revenge, the god
 Enjoin'd me not by force or open arms
 To rush upon them, but with guileful arts
 And silent well-conducted fraud betray them.
 Such was his will; thou therefore, soon as time

Shall lend thee opportunity, unknown
 And unsuspected (as thy absence hence
 For so long space and hoary age shall make thee)
 Must steal upon them, learn their secret counsels,
 As soon thou may'st, and quick inform us of them;
 Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus sent
 By one who is their friend and firm ally;
 Say, and confirm it with a solemn oath
 Orestes is no more, by a rude shock
 Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games;
 Be this thy tale; mean time (for thus the god
 His will divine express'd) my father's tomb
 With due libations and devoted hair
 Ourselves will crown; and thence returning bring,
 From the dark covert where thou know'st 'twas hid,
 The brazen urn; there, we shall tell the tyrant,

Thrice

From Phanoteus sent, &c. Phanoteus was a small midland town of Phocis, a city of Greece, famous for the Oracle of Delphos: according to Strabo it was formerly call'd Panope.

At the Pythian games, &c. The games here mention'd, and which are described in the second act, were not instituted till five hundred years after the death of Orestes; Sophocles therefore is found guilty by the critics of a flagrant anachronism in this place. Mr. Brumoy however endeavours to defend him by observing that though the latest Æra of their first celebration is dated at the 48th Olympiad, Apollo might nevertheless, immediately after the destruction of the Pytho, have himself instituted; something like the grand solemnity, which was many years afterwards heightened and improved by the public exhibition of these games under the influence of the civil power.

Thrice welcome news! Orestes' ashes lie.
What shou'd deter me from the pious fraud?
Since my feign'd death but gains me real fame,
And I shall wake to better life: the deed,
Which brings success and honour, must be good.
Oft times the wisest and the best of men
From death like this have rose with added greatness;
Ev'n so thy friend to his deluded foes
Shall soon return unlook'd for, and before them
Shine like a star with more distinguish'd lustre.
O! my lov'd country, and its guardian gods,
Receive Orestes, and with happy omen
Propitious smile, and thou, paternal seat,
For lo! by heav'n's command I come to purge thee
Of vile usurpers, and avenge thy wrongs;
Drive me not from thee an abandon'd exile
With infamy, but grant me to possess
My father's throne, and fix his injur'd race.
Thus far 'tis well: my faithful minister,

Thou

The pious fraud &c. The Greeks, who were remarkably superstitious, entertain'd a notion that to feign themselves dead had something in it both wicked and dangerous; they were apprehensive that death would not be thus mock'd, but would revenge the fraud by coming upon them in reality. Orestes endeavours to shake off these fears, and to vindicate himself by the example of others who had done the same, and pass'd unpunish'd.

Thou to thy office, we to ours with speed ;
 So time and opportunity require,
 On whom the fate of mortals must depend.

E L E C T R A.

[from within.]

O misery !

G O V E R N O R.

Methought a mournful voice

Spake from within.

O R E S T E S.

Perhaps the poor Electra,

Shall we not stay and hearken to it ?

G O V E R N O R.

No :

First be Apollo's great behests obey'd
 Before thy father's tomb ; that pious deed
 Perform'd shall fire our souls with nobler warmth
 And crown our bold attempt with fair success.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E

First be Apollo's, &c. The meeting of Electra and Orestes in this place would apparently have spoil'd the whole oeconomy of the drama ; it is therefore artfully defer'd by the poet, at the same time that the reason alledged by the old man gives us the most favourable idea of the piety of the antients. A brother has an opportunity of seeing and conversing with a sister whom he loved, and from whom he had been separated twenty years, but he forgoes it, in order previously to perform a religious duty. Christians may read and profit by the example.

S C E N E II.

E L E C T R A.

O! sacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
 Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
 Her sighs, and groans, and witness'd to her woes,
 Which ever as each hateful morn appear'd
 I pour'd before you; what at eve retir'd
 I felt of anguish my sad couch alone
 Can tell, which water'd nightly with my tears
 Receiv'd me sorrowing; that best can tell
 What pangs I suffer'd for a hapless father,
 Whom not the god of war with ruthless hand
 Struck nobly fighting in a distant foil,
 But my fell mother, and the curs'd Ægisthus,
 The part'ner of her bed, remorseless flew;
 Untimely didst thou fall, lamented shade,
 And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate;
 Nor shall she cease to mourn thee, while these eyes
 View the fair heavens, or behold the sun;
 Never, O! never! like the nightingale

Whose

Like the nightingale, &c. Philomela the daughter of Pandion, and sister of Procne the wife of Tereus. The poet, both in this and the following scene, takes the nightingale for Procne, as it was Procne and not Philomela who served up her son Itys to Tereus in revenge for the injury done to her sister. Æschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes also suppose Procne to have been changed into a nightingale.

Whose plaintive song bewails her ravish'd brood ;
 Here will I still lament my father's wrongs,
 And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
 O! ye infernal deities, and thou
 Terrestrial Hermes, and thou, Nemesis,
 Replete with curses, and ye vengeful furies,
 Offspring of Gods, the ministers of wrath
 To vile adult'ers, who with pity view
 The slaughter'd innocent, behold this deed!
 O! come, assist, revenge my father's murder;
 Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Orestes;
 For lo I sink beneath oppressive woe,
 And can no longer bear the weight alone.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S, E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

O! wretched daughter of an impious mother!
 Wilt thou for ever mourn, for ever thus
 With unavailing tears, and endless sorrow
 Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate,
 By a vile woman's wicked arts betray'd?
 Perish the hand (forgive the pious curse,
 Ye heav'nly pow'rs!) that gave the deadly blow!

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

My noble friends, and partners in affliction,
 Who thus, to sooth my sorrows, kindly try
 Each art which love and friendship can inspire;
 Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do,
 I know my tears are fruitless all and vain;
 But O! permit me to indulge my griefs,
 For I must weep.

C H O R U S.

Thy tears can ne'er recall him
 From the dark mansions of the common grave,
 No, nor thy pray'rs; they can but make thee wretched,
 And sink thee deeper in calamity;
 Why art thou then so fond of misery?

E L E C T R A.

Devoid of sense and feeling is the heart
 That can forget an injur'd parent's wrongs.
 I love the airy messenger of Jove,
 The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate,
 And ev'ry night repeats the tender tale;
 Thee too I reverence as a goddess, thee,

P

Unhappy

Messenger of Jove. Procne, called the messenger of Jove, from her ushering in the spring. See the note on Philomela,

Unhappy Niobe! for still thou weep'st,
And from the marble tears eternal flow.

C H O R U S.

But O! reflect, that not to thee alone
Misfortune comes, that comes to all: behold
Iphianassa, and Chrysothemis,
And him who hides his grief, illustrious youth,
Thy lov'd Orestes, these have suffer'd too.

E L E C T R A.

Orestes! yes, Mycenæ shall receive
In happy hour her great avenger; Jove
With smiles auspicious shall conduct him to me;
For him alone I wait, for him, a wretch
Despis'd, of children and of nuptial rites.
Hopeless I wander; he remembers not
What I have done for him, what suffer'd, still.

With

Unhappy Niobe. Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes; feign'd by the poets to be turn'd into stone, after the death of her children. See Ovid's Met. Book VI.

Iphianassa and Chrysothemis. Homer (Il. Book IX) mentions three daughters of Agamemnon, Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa. Euripides takes no notice of any but Iphigenia, (who was sacrificed) and Electra. Possibly the Laodice of Homer is the Electra of Sophocles. The poets took the liberty of changing circumstances of this nature, not essential to the subject, as they thought proper.

With airy promises he mocks my hopes,
And yet he comes not to me.

C H O R U S.

But he will.

Despair not, daughter; Jove is yet in heav'n,
The god who sees, and knows, and governs all:
Patient to him submit, nor let thy rage
Too far transport thee, nor oblivion drown
The just remembrance of thy matchless woes;
Time is a kind indulgent deity,
And he shall give thee succour, he shall send
The god of Acheron, from Chrysa's shores
To bring Orestes, and avenge thy wrongs.

E L E C T R A.

O! but the while how much of life is gone!
And I a hopeless wretched orphan still,
Without a friend to guard, or to protect me;
Disgrac'd, dishonour'd, like a stranger clad
In base attire, and fed with homeliest fare.

C H O R U S.

Sad news indeed the hapless messenger
To Argos brought, that spoke the wish'd return

P 2

OF

From Chrysa's shores. Chrysa, or Chryssa was a town of Phocis by the river side, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king; this is the place where Orestes was privately educated, and accounts for the so much celebrated friendship of the two princes.

Of thy lov'd father to his native foil;
 Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
 Or by a mortal or immortal hand;
 The work of fraud and lust, a horrid deed!
 Whoe'er perform'd it.

E L E C T R A.

O! detested feast!

O! day, the bitt'rest sure that ever rose!
 With him I perish'd then; but may the gods
 Repay the murth'ers; never may they hear
 The voice of joy, or taste of comfort more.

C H O R U S.

Cease thy complaints, already hast thou suffer'd
 For thy loud discontents, and threat'ned vengeance.
 'Tis folly to contend with pow'r superior.

E L E C T R A.

The work of fraud and lust. Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra are said to have watch'd Agamemnon as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a shirt without any opening at the neck, entangled in this they murder'd him; thus was the scheme laid by fraud and treachery and executed by lust.

Whoe'er perform'd it. The Chorus seems fearful of attributing that crime to Clytæmnestra and Ægisthus, which they knew them guilty of, and to doubt whether they were at liberty to imprecate the divine vengeance on them for it. Dacier attributes this to the author's own idea of government, as requiring the implicit submission of subjects to their king, whether he was their lawful sovereign or an usurper. Perhaps a better reason for this diffidence may be assign'd from the natural modesty of the sex, and the impiety of cursing those who had at least done no injury to them.

E L E C T R A.

Folly indeed, and madness! but my griefs
 Will force their way, and whilst Electra breathes
 She must lament; for who will bring me comfort,
 Or sooth my sorrows? let me, let me go,
 And weep for ever:

C H O R U S.

'Tis my love intreats;
 Trust me, I feel a mother's fondness for thee,
 And fain wou'd save thee from redoubled woes.

E L E C T R A.

And wou'lt thou have me then neglect the dead?
 Forget my father? can there be such guilt?
 When I do so may infamy pursue me!
 And if I wed, may all the joys of love
 Be far remov'd! if vengeance doth not fall
 On crimes like these, for ever farewell justice,
 Shame, honour, truth and piety, farewell!

C H O R U S.

I feel a mother's fondness, &c. The Chorus is composed of the principal ladies of Mycenæ; the air of authority with which they address Electra, their calling her daughter, with other circumstances, make it most probable that, as Dacier has remark'd, they were not virgins, but matrons of rank and quality in the city.

C H O R U S.

Pardon me, daughter; if my warmth offend,
Glad I submit; we'll follow, and obey thee.

E L E C T R A.

I am myself to blame, and blush to think
How much unfit I seem to bear the weight
Impos'd upon me; but indeed 'tis great:
Forgive me, friends, a woman born as I am,
Must she not grieve to see each added minute
Fraught with new mis'ries? thus to be a slave
Ev'n in my father's house, and from those hands
Which shed his blood to ask the means of life!
Think what my soul must suffer to behold
The curs'd Ægisthus seated on the throne
Of Agamemnon, in the very robes
Which once were his; to see the tyrant pour
Libations forth ev'n on the fatal spot,
Where the sad deed was done; but worst of all
To see the murderer usurp his bed,
Embrace my mother, (by that honour'd name
If I may call a guilty wretch like her)
Who pleas'd returns his love, and of her crimes
Unconscious smiles, nor fears th' avenging furies,
But ever as the bloody day returns

Which

Which gave the royal victim to her wiles,
 Annual the dance and choral song proclaim
 A solemn feast, nor impious sacrifice
 Forgets she then to her protecting gods.
 Shock'd at the cruel banquet I retire,
 And in some corner hide my griefs, deny'd
 Ev'n the sad comfort to indulge my sorrows;
 For Clytæmnestra in opprobrious terms
 Reviles me oft, "To thee alone, she cries,
 "Is Agamemnon lost, detested maid!
 "Think'st thou Electra only weeps his fate?
 "Perdition on thee! may th' infernal gods
 "Refuse thee succour, and protract thy pains!"
 Thus rails she bitter, and if chance she hear
 Orestes is approaching, stung with rage
 Wild she exclaims, "Thou art th' accursed cause,
 "This is thy deed, who stole Orestes from me,
 "And hid him from my rage; but be assur'd
 "E'er long my vengeance shall o'ertake thee for it!

These.

Proclaim a solemn feast. Nothing could add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytæmnestra, not content with murdering her husband, institutes a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and calls it, with cruel raillery, the supper of Agamemnon. Dinius, in his history of Argos, informs us it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

These threats her noble lord still urges on;
 That vile adult'rer, that abandon'd coward,
 Whose fearful soul call'd in a woman's aid
 To execute his bloody purposes.

Mean-time Electra sighs for her Orestes,
 Her wish'd avenger; his unkind delay
 Destroys my hopes; alas! my gentle friends,
 Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind?
 To suffer ills like mine, and not to err
 From wild distraction, wou'd be strange indeed.

C H O R U S.

But say, Electra, is the tyrant near?
 Or may we speak our thoughts unblam'd?

E L E C T R A.

Thou may'st;

I had not else beyond the palace dared
 To wander hither.

C H O R U S.

I wou'd fain have ask'd thee——

E L E C T R A.

Ask what thou wilt, Ægisthus is far off.

C H O R U S.

Touching thy brother then, inform me quick
 If aught thou know'st that merits firm belief.

E L E C T R A.

ELECTRA.

He promises, but comes not.

CHORUS.

Things of moment
Require deliberation and delay.

ELECTRA.

O! but did I delay to save Orestes?

CHORUS.

He boasts a noble nature, and will ne'er
Forget his friends: be confident.

ELECTRA:

I am,

Were I not so I had not liv'd till now.

CHORUS.

But soft; behold the fair Chrysothemis
Advance this way, and in her hand she bears
Sepulchral offerings to the shades below.

Q

SCENE

Sepulchral offerings. The libations, or sepulchral offerings here mention'd, were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; these were design'd to render the ghost kind and propitious, and were therefore call'd *χοαι ἡδυστηριοι* or *σελεκτηριοι*; these were pour'd upon the ground or grave-stone, and together with a certain form of words offer'd to the deceased.

S C E N E IV.

CHRYSOthemis, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOthemis.

Still, my Electra, pouring forth thy griefs?
 Art thou not yet by sad experience taught
 How little they avail? I too must feel
 And cou'd resent, as, were thy sister's pow'r
 But equal to her will, our foes shou'd know.
 Mean time with lower'd sails to bear the storm
 Befits us best, nor, helpless as we are,
 With idle hopes to meditate revenge;
 Yield then with me, and tho' impartial justice
 Plead on thy side, remember, if we prize
 Or life or liberty, we must obey.

E L E C T R A.

It ill becomes great Agamemnon's daughter
 Thus to forget her noble father's worth,
 And take a base unworthy mother's part;
 For well I see from whom thy counfels flow;
 Nought from thyself thou say'st but all from her:
 Either thy reason's lost or if thou hast it,
 Thou hast forgot thy friends who shou'd be dear
 And precious to thee: of thy boasted hate
 Against our foes, and what thou vaunt'st to do,

If thou had'st pow'r, I reckon not; whilst with me
Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but still
Dissuad'st me from it; is't not cowardly
To leave me thus? tell, I beg thee, tell me
What mighty gain awaits my tame submission,
Shou'd I suppress my griefs: I can but live,
That I do now, a wretched life indeed!
But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy
Whilst I can torture them, and to the dead
Pay grateful honours; (if to them such care
Aught grateful can bestow) thy hate, I fear me
Is but in word: thou dost befriend the murth'ers:
For me, not all the wealth they cou'd bestow,
Not all the gifts which they have pour'd on thee,
Shou'd bind me to 'em: take thy costly banquets,
And let thy days with ease and pleasure flow;
Give me but food, and I am satisfy'd.
I wish not for thy honours, nor wou'dst thou,
If thou wer't wife, receive 'em at their hands.
Thou might'st be daughter to the best of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name,
And henceforth all shall mark thee as a wretch
Who hath betray'd her father and her friends.

C H O R U S.

I do intreat you, let not anger come
 Between you thus; you both have reason'd well,
 And much of mutual benefit may flow,
 If each to other lend a patient ear.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Custom, my noble friends, hath made reproach
 Familiar to me, and so well I know
 Her haughty mind, I had been silent still
 But that I saw the danger imminent,
 And came to warn her of the fatal stroke,
 Which soon must end her, and her griefs together.

E L E C T R A.

Tell me this mighty danger, if aught more
 It threaten than Electra long hath borne,
 I yield me to thy counsels.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Hear me then:

Know, thou art doom'd, unless thou dost refrain
 Thy clam'rous griefs, far from the light of day,
 And this thy native soil, within a cell
 Dismal and dark to spend the poor remains
 Of thy sad life, and there lament thy fate.

E L E C T R A.

Is it decreed? must it in truth be so?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Soon as Ægisthus shall return, it must.

E L E C T R A.

Quick let him come; I long to see him here.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Alas! what dreadful imprecations these!

E L E C T R A.

Wou'd he were present, if for this he comes!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

What! to destroy thee! is thy mind disturb'd?

E L E C T R A.

That I might fly for ever from thy fight.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wilt thou not think how to preserve thy life?

E L E C T R A.

Mine is a blessed life indeed to think of.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

It might be blest, if thou wou'dst have it so.

E L E C T R A.

Teach me not basely to betray my friends.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I do not; all I ask thee is to yield

To pow'rs superior.

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

E L E C T R A.

Fawn on them thyself;

Thou dost not know Electra.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Sure it better

Deserves the name of wisdom to avoid

Than hasten thy destruction.

E L E C T R A.

No, to dye

Were pleasure, cou'd I but avenge my father.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis mean to think so.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wilt thou not consent?

E L E C T R A.

Never O! never be my soul so weak.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Then to my errand: fare thee well.

E L E C T R A.

To whom,

Chrysothemis, and whither dost thou bear

Those sacred off'rings?

C H R Y-

E L E C T R A.

119

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

To our father's tomb

From Clytæmnestra.

E L E C T R A.

To the man she hated?

The man, my sister——

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Whom she kill'd, I know

Thou wou'dst have said.

E L E C T R A.

Why, what shou'd move her to it?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If I mistake not, horrors late impress'd

From a sad vision.

E L E C T R A.

O! my country's gods,

Succour me now!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

What hopes dost thou conceive

From this?

E L E C T R A.

The dream: and I will tell thee all.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I know but little of it.

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

Tell me that :

Oft'times to words, how few foe'er they be,
Is giv'n the pow'r to save or to destroy.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Once more to light return'd (so fame reports)
Before her our lov'd father did appear,
The royal sceptre wielded in his hand
Which now Ægisthus bears, whence seem'd to spring
A green and leafy branch, whose wide extent
O'er all Mycenæ spread its verdant shade.
This did I learn, and this alone, from one
Who listen'd long attentive while she told
Her vision to the sun; hence all her fears,
And hence my destin'd journey,

E L E C-

Once more to light, &c. In the Coephoræ of Æschylus, Clytæmnestra dreams that she was brought to bed of a dragon to whom she gives suck, and who draws out all her blood. Sophocles, who borrow'd this incident from his predecessor, has alter'd and improved it; the circumstances here related are more interesting, and the interpretation more obvious; besides that, it is render'd instrumental to the plan of the drama, by sending Chrysothemis to her father's tomb, where she finds the offerings of Orestes, which prepares the discovery of his unexpected arrival.

Told her vision to the Sun. It was customary among the antients, when they had been terrify'd by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the sun, who, they imagin'd, as he had power to dispel the darkness, could also turn aside all the evils which the preceding night had threat'ned them with; Apollo was therefore stiled *αποτροπαιος* or the averter of evil, and had images erected to him under that title.

E L E C T R A.

By the gods .

Let me conjure thee, hear me; if thou dost not,
 Too late shalt thou repent, when for thy guilt
 Evil o'ertake thee; O! Chrysothemis!
 Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb
 Bear thou those off'rings; 'twere a horrid deed,
 From such a woman; give 'em to the winds,
 Let them be hid, deep bury'd in the sands,
 And not the smallest grain escape to reach
 That hallow'd place; let 'em remain for her,
 Safe in the earth till she shall meet 'em there.
 None but this shameless, this abandon'd woman
 Would e'er with impious off'rings thus adorn
 The tomb of him she murder'd: by the dead
 Think'st thou such gifts can be with joy receiv'd?
 Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corse
 Sever'd his lifeless limbs, and on the head

R

Of

Sever'd his lifeless limbs. The word *εμαχαλιθην* in the original, and which is made use of by Æschylus also, is supposed by the commentators to allude to a superstitious custom of achrotiresing, or cutting off the external parts of the person slain, and fixing them under their arm-pits; a kind of charm, which the murderer imagined would prevent him from sending the furies to revenge his murder.

Of the poor victim wip'd her bloody sword :
 Madness to think that off'rings and ablutions
 Cou'd purge such crimes, or wash her stains away ;
 Never, O ! never : but of this no more.
 Instant, my sister, thy devoted hair
 With these dishevell'd locks, and this my zone,
 Plain as it is and unadorn'd, shalt thou
 Bear to our father ; wretched off'rings these !
 But O ! 'tis all Electra now can give.
 Bear them, and suppliant on thy knees implore him
 To smile propitious, and assist his children ;
 Pray for Orestes too, that soon with pow'r
 He may return, and trample on our foes ;
 So shall a fairer tribute one day grace
 His honour'd tomb than now we can bestow.
 Trust me, my sister, we are still his care,
 I know, we are ; from him the vision came,
 The horrid dream that shook her guilty soul :
 Now then, I beg thee, be a friend to me ;
 Be to thyself a friend ; a friend to him,
 Of all mankind the dearest, our dead father.

C H O R U S.

Wip'd her bloody sword. The murderer wiped the instrument of the murder in the hair of the deceased, and then wash'd it, persuaded that this would wipe away the guilt also.

C H O R U S.

Well doth the pious virgin speak, and thou
Must yield to her requests.

C H R Y S O T H É M I S.

And so I will.

Where' reason dictates, strife shou'd never come;
But quick, dispatch, fulfill her just commands,
Yet, O! my friends, remember, our attempt
Is full of danger, and let nought escape
That may betray me to my cruel mother;
For, if it reach her ear, this daring act,
I fear me much, shall one day cost us dear.

[Exit Chrysothemis.]

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S, E L E C T R A.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Or my prophetic mind is now no more,
Attentive as of old to wisdom's lore,

R 2

Or

Scene V. This is the first song or intermede of the Chorus, who, after hearing the dream related by Chrysothemis, draw from it fair omens of Electra's success, and vengeance on the murderers of Agamemnon: it is remarkable that Electra remains on the stage all the time; a plain proof among many others that (as it is observed in the dissertation) the division of these tragedies into acts is merely arbitrary, and of late invention, as it would be absurd for the principal character to appear thus between the acts.

Or justice comes, with speedy vengeance fraught ;
 Echold ! the goddess arm'd with pow'r appears,
 It must be so, by Clytæmnestra's fears,
 And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought :
 Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
 Shall hither come his wrongs to vindicate ;
 And, in his gore imbrued,
 The fatal axe with him shall rise,
 Shall ask another sacrifice,
 And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Lo ! with unnumber'd hands, and countless feet
 The fury comes her destin'd prey to meet,
 Deep in the covert hid she glides unseen,
 Hangs o'er the trembling murth'rer's head,
 Or steals to the adult'rous bed,
 An awful witness of the guilty scene ;
 Doubtless the dream with all its terrors meant
 For crimes like these some dreadful punishment,
 If mortals aught from nightly visions know,
 If truth from great Apollo's shrine
 Appears in oracles divine,
 Presaging bliss to come, or threat'ning future woe.

E P O D E.

O! Pelops, to thy country and to thee,
The fatal course brought woe and misery;
For since the time when from his chariot thrown,
For thee the guilty wreath to gain,
The hapless Myrtilus was slain,
Nought has thy wretched race but grief and sorrow known.

End of A C T I.

The hapless Myrtilus. To understand this passage it is necessary to be acquainted with the following story.

Oenomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refused to give in marriage, because the oracle declared that a son-in-law would be fatal to him; he promised however to bestow his daughter on any man who should conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all, who were vanquish'd by him, should be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and perish'd in the attempt; the horses of Oenomaus were swift as the wind, and consequently invincible; these examples however did not deter Pelops, who enter'd the lists against Oenomaus, and bribed his charioteer Myrtilus with a promise of half his kingdom if he succeeded; Myrtilus listen'd to his offers, and purposely forgot to put the pins into the wheels of his master's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the course. Pelops espoused Hippodamia, but afterwards, instead of performing his promise to Myrtilus, chose rather to get rid of this instrument of treachery by throwing him into the sea. Mercury, who it seems was the father of Myrtilus, revenged the murder of his son by entailing curses on Pelops and all his posterity. It appears by this, that the Heathens believed that God punish'd the crimes of fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.

A C T II.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS absent, who alone cou'd curb
 Thy haughty spirit, and licentious tongue ;
 At large, it seems, thou rov'st, and unrestrain'd,
 No def'rence paid to my authority,
 But on thy mother ever pouring forth
 Bitter invectives, while the list'ning croud
 Are taught to hold me proud, and fierce of soul,
 A lawless tyrant stand'ring thee and thine :
 I am no stand'rer, I abhor the name,
 But oft revil'd, of force I must reply,
 And send thy foul reproaches back upon thee,
 Thou say'st I slew thy father ; that alone
 Is left to plead for all thy insolence.
 I do confess the deed, and glory in it ;
 I slew thy father ; yet not I alone,
 I had the hand of justice to assist me,
 And shou'd have had Electra's : well thou know'st
 That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears

Incessant

Inceſſant flow, that father ſlew his child ;
 He, he alone of all the Grecian hoſt
 Gave up his daughter, horrid ſacrifice !
 To the offended gods : he never felt
 A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them ;
 Or if he did, why ſlay the innocent ?
 For Greece thou tell'ſt me : Greece cou'd never claim
 A right to what was mine ; or did ſhe fall
 For Menelaus ? he had children too,
 Why might not they have dy'd ? their parent's guilt,
 Source of the war, more juſtly had deſerv'd it ;
 Or think'ſt thou death with keener appetite
 Cou'd feaſt on mine, and Helen's not afford
 As ſweet a banquet ? why was all the love,
 To me and to my child ſo juſtly due,
 With lavish hand beſtow'd on Menelaus ?
 Was he not then a baſe inhuman father ?
 He was : and ſo, cou'd Iphigenia ſpeak,

Thy

He had children too. According to Homer (See *Odyſſ.* b. 4.) Menelaus had only one child, Hermione. Heſiod gives him two, Hermione and Nicoſtratus : the latter tradition was more agreeable to Sophocles ; becauſe, if Menelaus had but one child, the loſs would have been greater to him than to Agamemnon, who had many ; this we ſee, would deſtroy the force of Clytæmneſtra's argument, which is ſtrengthen'd by the other ſuppoſition.

Cou'd Iphigenia ſpeak. Clytæmneſtra endeavours to palliate her guilt by reproaching Agamemnon with the ſacrifice of Iphigenia. Euripides ſtrengthens this

Thy breathless sister, she too wou'd declare:
 Know then, I grieve not; shame or penitence
 I feel not for the deed; and if to thee
 It seem so heinous, weigh each circumstance,
 Remember what he did, and lay the blame
 On him who well deserv'd the fate he suffer'd.

E L E C T R A.

Thou hast no plea for bitterness like this;
 Thou canst not say that I provok'd thee to it,
 I have been silent: had I leave to speak
 I cou'd defend an injur'd father's cause,
 And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

I do permit thee; and if modest thus
 Thou hadst address'd me always, thy free speech
 Had ne'er offended.

E L E C T R A.

Hast thou not confess'd
 That thou didst slay my father? whether justice
 Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confess it;

But

this plea by the addition of another, which the ladies will allow to have been still more forcible, viz. that Agamemnon kept another woman, and even brought her into the same house with his wife. The fact is thus alluded to by Ovid,

Dum fuit Atrides una contentus, & illa
 Casta fuit; vitio est improba facta viri.

But justice never cou'd persuade thee, no ;
 I'll tell thee who it was, it was Ægisthus,
 The wretch with whom thou liv'st; go ask the goddess,
 Th' immortal huntress, why the winds were stay'd
 So long at Aulis; but thou must not ask
 The chaste Diana; take it then from me;
 My father once, as for the chace prepar'd,
 Careless he wander'd thro' her sacred grove,
 Forth from it's covert rous'd a spotted hind,
 Of fairest form, with tow'ring antlers grac'd,
 Pursu'd and slew her; of the deity
 Something with pride elate he utter'd then
 Disdainful; quick resenting the affront,
 Latona's daughter stay'd the Grecian fleet,
 Nor wou'd forgive, till for her slaughter'd beast
 Th' offending father sacrific'd his child.
 Thus Iphigenia fell; and but for her,

S

Greece

Thou must not ask the chaste Diana. A murderer and adulteress, like Clytæmnestra, must not dare approach or speak to the goddess of chastity. Clytæmnestra feels the reproach, but at the same time, to persuade Electra that she was not affected by it, a few lines after we find her invoking that goddess, "by chaste Diana, soon as Ægisthus comes, &c."

My father once &c. There is certainly an impropriety (though not, as I remember, observed by any of the commentators) in relating this story to Clytæmnestra, who, we must suppose, could be no stranger to it. Sophocles, however, thought it might be necessary to acquaint the audience with this circumstance, and therefore took this method to inform them of it.

Greece ne'er had seen or Ilion's lofty tow'rs,
Or her own native foil; the father strove
In vain to save, and not for Menelaus
He gave her up at last, but for his country.
Suppose a brother's fondness had prevail'd,
And she was giv'n for him, wou'd that excuse
Thy horrid deed? what law requir'd it of thee?
That law alone by which thyself must fall;
If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fix'd.
Plead not so poorly then, but tell me why
Thou liv'st adult'rous thus with a vile ruffian,
Thy base assistant? why are those, who sprung
From thy first nuptials, cast unkindly forth
For his new race? was this thy piety?
Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death?
In pure revenge to wed her deadliest foe
Was noble, was it not? but I forget,
You are my mother, so it seems you say,
And I must hold my peace; but I deny it;
I say you are my mistress, not my mother;
A cruel mistress that afflicts my soul,
And makes this weary life a burthen to me.
Orestes too, the hapless fugitive,
Who once escap'd thy fatal hand, now drags

A loathsome being; him, thou say'st, I look'd for
 To join in my revenge, and so I did;
 I wou'd have been reveng'd, I tell thee so:
 Say, I am base, malicious, impudent,
 Abusive, what thou wilt; for if I am,
 It speaks my birth, and I resemble thee.

C H O R U S.

Resentment deep hath fir'd the virgin's breast;
 Whether with truth and justice on her side
 She speak, I know not.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Can they plead for her?
 What care, what love, or tenderness is due
 To an abandon'd child, who shameless thus
 Reviles a parent? is there, after this,
 A crime in nature she wou'd blush to act?

E L E C T R A.

I am not base, nor shameless, as thou call'st me,
 For know, even now I blush for what is past,
 Indecent warmth, and words that ill became
 My tender years, and virgin modesty;
 But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice urg'd me to it;
 From bad examples, bad alone we learn,
 I only err'd because I follow'd thee.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Impudent wretch! and am I then the cause
Of all thy clam'rous insolence?

E L E C T R A.

Thou art:

Foul is thy speech, because thy deed was foul;
For words from actions flow.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

By chaste Diana,

Soon as Ægisthus comes, thy boldness meets
Its just reward.

E L E C T R A.

Is this thy promis'd leave,

So lately granted, freely to unfold
What now incens'd thou dost refuse to hear?

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Have I not heard thee, and in base return
With luckless omen dost thou now retard
My pious sacrifice?

E L E C-

With luckless omen &c. The antients were of opinion, that if, during the time of sacrifice, they heard any thing melancholy, it was an ill omen; in the beginning of those therefore that were public, silence was enjoin'd to all present; hence the phrase of favete linguis.

E L E C T R A.

O! far from me

Be guilt like that; perform it, I beseech thee;
 In holy silence shall these lips be clos'd,
 And not a word escape to thwart thy purpose.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[speaking to one of her attendants.]

Hither do thou the sacred off'rings bring
 Of various fruits compos'd, that to the god
 Whose altars we adorn, my fervent pray'r
 May rise accepted, and dispel my fears.
 Hear then, Apollo, great protector, hear
 My secret vows, for with no friendly ear
 My voice is heard; her malice wou'd betray,
 Shou'd I unveil my heart, each word I utter'd,
 And scatter idle rumours thro' the croud.
 Thus then accept my pray'rs, Lycean Phœbus!
 If in the doubtful visions of the night

[softly.]

[aloud.]

Which

Hear my secret vows. Brumoy observes on this passage, that Clytæmnestra here retires towards a corner of the scene, near the altar, where she makes her prayer, and offers the sacrifice, whilst Electra remains upon the stage at a little distance from her; we must suppose her therefore, speaking part of this speech aloud, and part softly, so as not to be over-heard by Electra; she implores Apollo to mark rather the purport, than the words of her prayer; thus she utters in a low voice, till she comes to, Lycean Phœbus, &c. which she speaks aloud.

Which broke my slumbers, aught prefaging good
 Thou see'st, propitious O! confirm it all;
 But if of dire portent, and fraught with ill
 To me and mine they came, avert the omen,
 And send the evil back upon my foes!
 O! if there are, whose fraudulent arts conspire
 To cast me forth from all my present bliss,
 Let 'em not prosper, but protect me still!
 Grant me to live and reign in quiet here,
 To spend each happy hour with those I love;
 With those my children who have ne'er offended
 By malice, pride and bitterness of soul.
 Grant this, indulgent Phœbus! what remains
 Unask'd, thou see'st; for nought escapes the eye
 Of gods, such knowledge have the sons of Jove!

S C E N E II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, CLYTÆMNESTRA,
 ELECTRA, CHORUS.

G O V E R N O R.

Is this the royal palace of Ægisthus?

C H O R U S.

With these my children &c. Iphianassi and Chrysothemis, who had not affronted her; in opposition to Electra, who had.

What remains unask'd, &c. Most probably the death of Orestes and Electra, which she did not dare to mention in the presence of her daughter. Clytæmnestra's character is finely drawn; her very prayers we see are wicked, and greivable to her actions.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, it is.

G O V E R N O R.

And this, for such her form
And look majestic speak her, is his queen;
Is it not so?

C H O R U S.

It is.

G O V E R N O R.

Great sov'reign, hail!
With joyful news I come, and from a friend,
To thee and to Ægifthus.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Stranger, welcome;
Say, first, from whom thy message?

G O V E R N O R.

From Phanoteus
A Phocian sends thee things of utmost moment.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Of moment say'st thou? what? impart them quick;
Of friendly import, if from thence they come,
I know they must be.

G O V E R N O R.

Briefly then, 'tis this:

Orestes is no more.

E L E C T R A.

Undone Electra!

Now am I lost indeed.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

What say'st thou? speak,

Regard not her; go on.

G O V E R N O R.

I say again,

Orestes is no more.

E L E C T R A.

Then what am I?

I too am nothing.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A. [to Electra.]

Get thee hence, away!

Disturb us not: most welcome messenger;

[to the Governor.]

Go on, I beg thee, let me hear it all;

Say how he dy'd; tell ev'ry circumstance.

G O V E R N O R.

For that I came, and I will tell thee all.

Know then, Orestes at the Pythian games,

Eager

Orestes at the Pythian games, &c. Our modern critics will perhaps be of opinion, that this description of the Pythian games, so much admired by the favourers

Eager for glory met assembled Greece ;
 Soon as the herald's far-resounding voice
 Proclaim'd the course, the graceful youth appear'd,
 And was by all admir'd : successful soon
 He reach'd the goal, and bore his prize away.
 Ne'er did these eyes behold such feats perform'd
 By mortal strength ; in ev'ry course superior
 He rose victorious : theme of ev'ry tongue
 Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' son,
 Who led the Græcian host ; but O ! in vain
 Doth human valour strive, when pow'r divine
 Pursues vindictive ! the succeeding morn
 Uprose the sun, and with him all the train
 Of youthful rivals in the chariot race ;
 One from Achaia, one from Sparta came,

T

Of

ers of antiquity, is too long, and rather interrupts than carries on the business of the drama ; it will be in vain therefore to inform them, that this circumstantial detail was necessary to give the story an air of veracity in the eyes of the person to whom it is related, at the same time that the author had by this means an opportunity of shewing his poetical and descriptive talents in the narration.

In ev'ry course superior, &c. The πενταδλον or quinquertium, here alluded to, consisted of five exercises, viz. leaping, running, throwing, darting, and wrestling ; Orestes conquer'd in every one of them ; this was the business of the first day of the games, the second was employ'd in the chariot-race, which is here minutely and accurately described.

One from Achaia, &c. In the Greek it is the first from Achaia, the second from Sparta, and so on to the tenth, which would have made an awkward appearance in English ; I have therefore taken the liberty to vary the method of enumerating them in the translation.

Of Afric's sons advanc'd a noble pair,
 And join'd the throng; with these Orestes drove
 His swift Thessalian steeds; Ætolia next
 For yellow courfers fam'd; and next Magnesia;
 And Athens, built by hands divine, sent forth
 Her skilful charioteer; an Ænian next
 Drove his white Horses thro' the field; and last
 A brave Bæotian clos'd the warrior train.
 And now in order rang'd, as each by lot
 Determin'd stood, forth at the trumpet's sound
 They rush'd together, shook their glitt'ring reins,
 And lash'd their foaming courfers o'er the plain.
 Loud was the din of ratt'ling cars invol'd
 In dusty clouds; close on each other prest
 The rival youths, together stopt, and turn'd
 Together all: the hapless Ænian first,
 His fiery steeds impatient of subjection,
 Entangled on the Lybian chariot hung;
 Confusion soon and terror thro' the croud
 Disastrous spread; the jarring axles rung;

Wheel

Athens, built by hands divine. Sophocles, who was an Athenian, takes every opportunity of doing honour to his countrymen; Athens, we see, is distinguish'd by him in the list as built by hands divine; and the Athenian charioteer selected from the rival chiefs, to contend with his hero Orestes, who had easily overcome all the rest.

Wheel within wheel now crack'd, till Chrysa's field
Was with the scatter'd ruins quite o'erspread.
Th' Athenian cautious view'd the distant danger,
Drew in the rein, and turn'd his car aside,
Then past them all. Orestes, who secure
Of conquest lagg'd behind, with eager pace
Now urg'd his rapid course, and swift pursu'd:
Sharp was the contest; now th' Athenian first,
And now Orestes o'er his coursers hung,
Now side by side they ran; when to the last
And fatal goal they came, Atrides' son,
As chance with slacken'd rein he turn'd the car,
Full on the pillar struck, tore from the wheel
Its brittle spokes, and from his feat down drop'd
Precipitate; entangled in the reins
His fiery coursers dragg'd him o'er the field,
Whilst shrieking crouds with pity view'd the youth,
Whose gallant deeds deserv'd a better fate.
Scarce cou'd they stop the rapid car, or loose
His mangled corse, so drench'd in blood, so chang'd,
That scarce a friend cou'd say it was Orestes.
Strait on the pile they burnt his sad remains,
And, in an urn enclos'd, a chosen few
From Phocis sent have brought his ashes home,

To reap due honours in his native land.

Thus have I told thee all, a dreadful tale!
But O! how far more dreadful to behold it,
And be like me a witness of the scene!

C H O R U S.

Ah me! the royal race, the antient house
Of my lov'd master is no more!

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Great Jove!

Th' event was happy, but 'tis mix'd with woe.
For, O! 'tis bitter to reflect, that life
And safety must be purchas'd by misfortunes.

G O V E R N O R.

Why grieve you, madam?

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

'Tis a bitter task

To bring forth children; tho' a mother's wrong'd,
A mother cannot hate the babe she bore.

G O V E R N O R.

'Then with ungrateful news in vain I came;

CLY-

'Tis mix'd with woe. Dacier highly commends the art of the poet in Clytemnestra's expression of uneasiness at the death of Orestes; as to have received the news without any marks of tenderness or compassion would have been shocking to nature and humanity. But perhaps a better reason for this dissembled sorrow may be drawn from her willingness to preserve some decency and appearance of virtue in the eyes of the messenger.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

O no; most welcome is the man who brings
 Such joyful tidings, that a thankless child
 Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
 To live a voluntary exile from me;
 Ne'er to these eyes return'd, but absent rag'd,
 And threaten'd vengeance for his murder'd father;
 Day had no rest for me, nor did the night
 Bring needful slumbers, thoughts of instant death
 Appall'd me ever; but my fears are gone;
 He cannot hurt me now, nor worse than him,
 This vile domestic plague, who haunts me still
 To suck my vital blood; but henceforth safe,
 Spite of her threats, shall Clytæmnestra live.

E L E C T R A.

Now, my Orestes, I indeed must mourn
 Thy cruel fate, embitter'd by reproach,
 And from a mother's tongue; this is not well.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

With him it is, and wou'd it were with thee!

E L E C T R A.

Attend, O! Nemesis! and hear the dead!

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

She heard that voice which best deserv'd her ear,
 And her decrees are just.

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

Go on, proud woman ;
 Insult us now, whilst fortune smiles upon thee.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Dost thou then hope that we shall fall hereafter ?

E L E C T R A.

No! we are fall'n ourselves, and cannot hurt thee.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Thrice worthy is that messenger of joy
 Whose gladsome news shall stop thy clam'rous tongue.

G O V E R N O R.

My task perform'd, permit me to retire.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

No, stranger, that were an affront to thee,
 And to our friend who sent thee here. Go in,
 And leave that noisy wretch to bellow forth
 Her sorrows, and bewail her lost Orestes.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E III.

E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

E L E C T R A.

Mark'd ye, my friends, did ye observe her tears ?
 Did she lament him? did the mother weep
 For her lost child? O no; she smiled and left me ;

Wretched

Wretched Electra! O my dear Orestes!
 Thou hast undone me; thou wert all my hope.
 I thought thou woud'st have liv'd to aid my vengeance
 For our lov'd father's death; depriv'd of both
 Whither shall I betake me! left at last
 A slave to those whom most on earth I hate,
 The cruel murth'ers; must it then be so?
 Never, O never! thus bereft of all,
 Here will I lay me down, and on this spot
 End my sad days; if it offend the tyrants,
 Let 'em destroy me; 'twill be kindly done;
 Life is a pain; I woud not wi'h to keep it.

C H O R U S.

Where is thy thunder, Jove? or, where thy pow'r,

O

Here will I lay me down. Electra, shock'd at the behaviour of Clytæmnestra, and apprehensive of still worse treatment than she had ever yet received, is resolv'd never to re-enter the palace of Ægisthus; but lays herself down in anguish on the ground to lament her misfortunes. There is something not unlike this in Shakespear's king John, where Constance throws herself on the Earth. See king John, act 3, scene 1.

Where is thy thunder, Jove, &c. I see no reason for making the alteration here propos'd by Dacier, and putting these words into the mouth of Electra; surely the reflection comes naturally from the chorus, who had been witnesses of Clytæmnestra's behaviour on the news of Orestes' death. It may not be improper here to observe that this is generally call'd the second intermede, or song of the chorus; who in conjunction with Electra remaining on the stage, as at the end of the first act, sing a kind of dirge, lamenting the miseries of their friend, and endeavouring to comfort her under them; this is all in Strophe and Antistrophe, and most probably was set to music: it shou'd therefore, according to my plan, have

O Phœbus! if thou dost behold this deed
And not avenge it?

E L E C T R A.

Oh!

C H O R U S.

Why mourn'st thou thus?

E L E C T R A.

Alas!

C H O R U S.

O! do not groan thus.

E L E C T R A.

Thou destroy'st me.

C H O R U S.

How have I hurt thee?

E L E C T R A.

Why thus vainly try

To give me comfort, when I know he's dead?

You but insult my woes.

C H O R U S.

Yet weep not thus.

Think

have been put into rhyme, to distinguish it from the other parts of the drama; but as it consists of question and answer, it would have made but a strange and uncouth appearance in that garb. I have therefore preserved the blank verse, which my readers will, I believe, think with me was much more suitable to it,

Think on the golden bracelet that betray'd
Amphiaraus, who now——

E L E C T R A.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

——In blifs

Immortal reigns among the shades below:

E L E C T R A.

Alas!

C H O R U S.

No more; a woman was the cause,
Th' accurf'd cause.

E L E C T R A.

She fuffer'd, did ſhe not?

C H O R U S.

She did; ſhe perifh'd.

E L E C T R A.

Yes; I know it well;

He found a kind avenger of his wrongs,
But I have none, for he is raviſh'd from me.

U C H O R U S.

The golden bracelet that betray'd Amphiaraus. Amphiaraus was a famous ſoothſayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was ſolicited by Adraſtus to aſſiſt Polynices, his ſon-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreſeeing by his art that if he went he ſhould be ſlain, hid himſelf, but was diſcover'd by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the ſiege of Thebes, perifh'd there. Alcmaon his ſon re-venge'd his father's death, and ſlew his mother Eriphyle.

C H O R U S.

Thou art indeed unhappy.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis too true.

I am most wretched, it comes thick upon me;

My sorrows never cease.

C H O R U S.

We see thy woes.

E L E C T R A.

Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort;

There is no hope.

C H O R U S.

What say'st thou?

E L E C T R A.

There is none,

None left for me; my noble brother slain.

C H O R U S.

Death is the lot of human race.

E L E C T R A.

But, oh!

Not death like his; entangled in the reins,

His mangled body dragg'd along the field.

C H O R U S.

A strange unthought of chance.

E L E C T R A.

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E L E C T R A.

And then to fall

A wretched stranger in a foreign land.

C H O R U S.

O! horrible!

E L E C T R A.

No sister there to close

His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb,

Or pay the last sad tributary tear.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T II.

U 2

A C T III.

CHRYSO THEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSO THEMIS.

FORGIVE me, sister, if my hasty steps
 Press unexpected on thee; but I come
 With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils,
 And make thee happy.

ELECTRA.

What can'st thou have found
 To soften ills that will admit no cure?

CHRYSO THEMIS.

Orestes is arrived; as sure as here
 I stand before thee, the dear youth is come.

ELECTRA.

Can'st thou then make a mock'ry of my woes?
 Or dost thou rave?

CHRY-

My hasty steps, &c. Camerarius, in a note on this passage, very gravely remarks, that a lady should never run, "quoniam in mulieribus cunctabunda omnia magis probantur," because it's more becoming in women to do every thing deliberately. Dacier likewise, with the refinement of a true French critic, observes, that it would be highly indecent in a virgin and a princess to walk fast: Sophocle, says he, ne manque pas à une seule bien-séance. Of such sagacious and inadvertent observations as these, do principally consist the illustrations of both the antient and modern commentators on Sophocles; scarce one of which (Brumoy excepted) seems to have read him with any taste or judgment.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

No, by our father's gods,
I do not mean to scoff; but he is come.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! who told thee so? What tongue deceiv'd
Thy credulous ear?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Know, from myself alone
I learn'd the truth, and confirmations strong
Oblige me to believe it.

E L E C T R A.

What firm proof
Can'st thou produce? what hast thou seen or known
To raise such flatt'ring hopes?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

O! by the gods
I beg thee but to hear me, then approve
Or blame, impartial.

E L E C T R A.

If to tell thy tale
Can give thee pleasure, say it; I attend.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Know then, that soon as to our father's tomb
Eager I came, my wond'ring eyes beheld

Down from its side a milky fountain flow,
 As lately pour'd by some benignant hand;
 With various flow'rs the sacred spot adorn'd
 Encreas'd my doubts; on ev'ry side I look'd
 And listen'd long impatient for the tread
 Of human footsteps there; but all was peace.
 Fearless approaching then the hallow'd spot,
 I saw it spread with fresh devoted hair;
 Instant my soul recall'd its dearest hope,
 Nor doubted whence the pious off'rings came;
 I snatch'd them up and silent gaz'd, while joy
 Sprang in my heart, and fill'd my eyes with tears.
 They were, they must be his; ourselves alone
 Excepted, who cou'd bring them? 'twas not I,
 And 'tis not giv'n to thee to leave these walls
 Ev'n for the gods; our mother scarce wou'd do
 So good an office; or ev'n grant she might,
 We must have known it soon; be confident,

It

Our mother scarce, &c. This assertion may probably appear strange from the mouth of Chrysothemis, who had herself so lately been sent by Clytæmnestra with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon; why therefore might not she have made these libations also? There is no way of reconciling this seeming inconsistency, but by supposing that the libations here mention'd were of a different nature from the former; the first were an expiatory offering to turn aside the vengeance of the deceased; the last, of that kind which was generally made use of to signify the peculiar love and affection of those who made them.

It was Orestes then; rejoice, Electra;
Sister, rejoice; the same destructive pow'r
Doth not for ever rule; behold at last
A milder god, and happier days appear.

E L E C T R A.

Madness, and folly! how I pity thee!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Have I not brought most joyful tidings to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! thou know'st not where nor what thou art.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Not know it? not believe what I have seen?

E L E C T R A.

I tell thee, wretched as thou art, he's dead;
He and thy hop'd-for bliss are gone together.
Thou must not think of him.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

A wretch indeed

I am, if this be so; but O! from whom,
Where didst thou learn the fatal news?

E L E C-

He's dead. The hopes and joy of Chrysothemis are finely contrasted by the grief and despair of Electra. One brings the news of his arrival, the other of his death; thus the spectator, who is already acquainted with the truth, is made to sympathize with the unhappy sisters, and grows impatient for the discovery. Every subordinate circumstance, we see, by the artful conduct of the poet, is introduced to prepare the principal event, and heighten the terror and surprise of the catastrophe.

E L E C T R A.

From one,

Who was a witness of his death.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Where is he?

Amazement chills my soul.

E L E C T R A.

He is within;

And no unwelcome guest to Clytæmnestra.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Alas! who then cou'd bring these pious gifts?

E L E T R A.

Some friend to lost Orestes plac'd them there.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I flew with joy to tell thee better news,

And little thought to hear so sad a tale.

The griefs I came to cure are present still,

And a new weight of woes is come upon us.

E L E C T R A.

But know, my sister, all may yet be well,

If thou wilt hear me.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Can I raise the dead?

E L E C-

E L E C T R A.

I am not mad that I shou'd ask it of thee.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

What wou'dst thou have me do?

E L E C T R A.

I'd have thee act

As I shall dictate to thee.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If aught good

It may produce, I do consent.

E L E C T R A.

Remember,

That if we hope to prosper, we must bear;
 Success in all that's human must depend
 On patience and on toil.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I know it well,

And stand resolv'd to bear my part in all,

E L E C T R A.

Hear then the solemn purport of my soul.
 Thou know'st too well how friendless and forlorn
 We both are left, by death bereav'd of all
 Who cou'd support us; whilst Orestes liv'd
 I cherish'd flatt'ring thoughts of sweet revenge,

But he is gone, and thou art now my hope.
 Yes, thou must join (for I will tell thee all)
 With thy Electra to destroy Ægisthus,
 To kill the murth'rer; why shou'd we delay?
 Is aught of comfort left? thou can'st but weep
 Thy ravish'd fortunes torn unjustly from thee;
 Thou canst but mourn thy loss of nuptial rites,
 And each domestic bliss; for O! my sister,
 The tyrant cannot be so weak of soul
 As e'er to suffer our detested race
 To send new branches forth for his destruction:
 Assist me then; so shalt thou best deserve
 A father's praises and a brother's love;
 So shalt thou still, as thou wert born, be free,
 And gain a partner worthy of thy bed.
 Dost thou not hear th' applauding voice of fame,
 And ev'ry tongue conspire to praise the deed?
 Will they not mark us as we pass along,
 And cry aloud, "behold the noble pair!
 "The pious sisters who preserv'd their race,
 "Whose daring souls, unaw'd by danger, fought
 "The tyrants life, regardless of their own.
 "What love to these, what reverence is due!
 "These shall th' assembled nation throng to praise,

" And

“ And ev’ry feaft with public honours crown,
 “ The fit reward of more than female virtue?
 Thus will they talk, my fifter, whilft we live,
 And after death our names fhall be immortal.
 Aid then a brother’s, aid a fifter’s caufe,
 Think on thy father’s wrongs, preferve Electra,
 Preferve thyfelf; and, O! remember well
 That, to the noble mind, a life difhonour’d
 Is infamy and fhame.

C H O R U S.

Be prudence now
 The guide of both.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Her mind was fure disturb’d,
 My friends, or fhe wou’d ne’er have talk’d fo wildly.
 Tell me, I beg thee tell me, my Electra,
 How cou’dft thou think fo rash an enterprize
 Cou’d e’er fucceed, or how request my aid?
 Haft thou confider’d what thou art? a woman,
 Weak and defencelefs, to thy foes unequal.
 Fortune thou fee’ft each hour flows in upon them,
 Nor deigns to look on us: what hand fhall deal
 The fatal blow and pafs unpunifh’d for it?
 Take heed, my fifter, left, thy counfel heard,

A heavier fate than what we now lament
 Fall on us both; what will our boasted fame
 Avail us then? It is not death alone
 We have to fear; to die is not the worst
 Of human ills, it is to wish for death
 And be refus'd the boon; consider well,
 E'er we destroy ourselves and all our race.
 Be patient, dear Electra; for thy words,
 As they had ne'er been utter'd, here they rest.
 Learn to be wise at last; and when thou know'st
 Resistance vain, submit to pow'rs superior.

C H O R U S.

Submit, convinc'd that prudence is the first
 Of human blessings.

E L E C T R A.

'Tis as I expected;
 I knew full well thou woudst reject my counsel,
 But I can act alone; nor shall this arm
 Shrink at the blow, or leave it's work unfinish'd.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Wou'd thou hadst shewn this so much vaunted prowess
 When our lov'd father dy'd!

E L E C T R A.

I was the same

By nature then, but of a weaker mind.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Be sure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

E L E C T R A.

Thy aid will ne'er increase it.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

'Twill be wanted;

For those, who act thus rashly, must expect

The fate they merit.

E L E C T R A.

I admire thy prudence,

But I detest thy cowardice.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I hear thee

With patience; for the time must one day come

When thou shalt praise me.

E L E C T R A.

Never:

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Be that left

For time to judge; enough remains.

E L E C T R A.

Away;

There's no dependence on thee.

C H R Y-

E L E C T R A.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

But there is,
Had'st thou a mind dispos'd for it's acceptance.

E L E C T R A.

Go, tell thy mother all.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

I am not yet
So much thy enemy.

E L E C T R A.

And yet wou'd lead me
To infamy.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

To safety and to wisdom.

E L E C T R A.

Must I then judge as thy superior reason
May dictate to me?

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

When thy better mind
Shall come, I'll not refuse to follow thee.

E L E C T R A.

Pity who talks so well, shou'd act so poorly!

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

That censure falls on thee.

E L E C T R A.

What I have said

Is truth.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Truth, sister, may be dangerous.

E L E C T R A.

Rather than thus submit I will not live.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Hereafter thou wilt praise me.

E L E C T R A.

I shall act

As seems most fit, nor wait for thy direction.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Art thou resolv'd then? wilt thou not repent
And take my counsel?

E L E C T R A.

Counsel, such as thine,

Is of all ills the worst.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Because, Electra,

Thou dost not seem to understand it.

E L E C T R A.

Know then,

That long ere this I had determin'd all,

C H R Y-

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Then fare thee well; thou canst not bear my word.
Nor I thy actions.

E L E C T R A.

Go thy ways; henceforth
I will not commune with thee; not thy pray'rs,
No, nor thy tears shou'd ever bend me to it;
Such idle commerce were the height of folly.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

If thou dost think this wisdom, think so still;
But when destruction comes, thou wilt approve
My better counsel, and be wise too late.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Man's ungrateful wretched race,
Shall the birds of heav'n disgrace,
Whose ever-watchful, ever-pious young,
Protect the feeble parent whence they sprung?

But

Man's ungrateful, &c. This, according to the received division into five acts, is the third song or intermede of the chorus, and closes the second act, which we may observe is thus made to consist of only a single scene; an absurdity which need not be pointed out to the judicious reader. The chorus in this song, struck by the piety and resolution of Electra, lament her condition, and blame the coldness of Chrysothemis, who had refused to join her in revenging the death of their father.

But if the blast of angry Jove
 Hath pow'r to strike, or justice reigns above,
 Not long unpunish'd shall such crimes remain ;
 When thou, O fame! the messenger of woe,
 Shalt bear these tidings to the realms below,
 Tidings to Grecia's chiefs of sorrow and of pain.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Bid the sad Atridæ mourn
 Their house by cruel faction torn ;
 Tell 'em, no longer by affection join'd,
 The tender sisters bear a friendly mind ;
 The poor Electra now alone,
 Making her fruitless solitary moan,
 Like Philomela weeps her father's fate ;
 Fearless of death and ev'ry human ill,
 Resolv'd her steady vengeance to fulfill ;
 Was ever child so good, or piety so great ?

S T R O P H E II.

Still are the virtuous and the good
 By adverse fortune unsubstid,
 Nor e'er will stoop to infamy and shame ;
 Thus Electra dauntless rose
 The War to wage with virtue's foes,
 To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Far, far above thy enemies,
In pow'r and splendor mayst thou rise,
And future blifs compensate present woe!
For thou hast shewn thy pious love,
By all that's dear to heav'n above,
Or sacred held by mortals here below.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T III.

A C T IV.

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

O R E S T E S, P Y L A D E S, (with ATTENDANTS)
ELECTRA, CHORUS.

O R E S T E S.

SAY, virgins, if by right instruction led
This way, I tend to——

C H O R U S.

Whither wou'dst thou go?

O R E S T E S.

The palace of Ægiffthus.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, well

Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

O R E S T E S.

Who then amongst your train shall kindly speak
A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news
Of highest import?

C H O R U S.

Be that office her's, [pointing to Electra.]

Whom bound by nature's ties it best befits.

O R E S T E S.

Go then, and say from Phocis are arriv'd
Who beg admittance to the king.

E L E C T R A.

Alas!

And com'st thou then to prove the dreadful tale
Already told?

O R E S T E S:

What you have heard I know not,
But of Orestes came I here to speak
By Strophius's command.

E L E C T R A.

What is it, say;

O how I dread thy message!

O R E S T E S. [shewing the urn.]

Here behold

His poor remains——

E L E C T R A.

O! lost, undone Electra!

Tis then too plain, and mis'ry is compleat.

O R E S T E S.

If for Orestes thus thy sorrows flow,
Know that within this urn his ashes lye.

E L E C-

What you have heard I know not. To prevent any suspicion of fraud or connivance, Orestes pretends to be an utter stranger to the message brought by the governor. The news coming thus by different hands, and at different times, confirms the report more strongly, and heighens the surprize at the discovery.

E L E C T R A.

Do they indeed? then let me, by the gods
 I do intreat thee, let me snatch them from thee,
 Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate,
 And mourn our hapless race.

O R E S T E S.

Give her the urn,
 Whoe'er she be; for not with hostile mind
 She craves the boon; perhaps some friend, perhaps
 By blood united.

E L E C T R A. [taking the Urn.]

O! ye dear remains

Of my Orestes, the most lov'd of men!
 How do I see thee now! how much unlike
 What my fond hopes presag'd, when last we parted!
 I sent thee forth with all the bloom of youth
 Fresh on thy cheek, and now, O! dismal change!
 I bear thee in these hands an empty shade.
 Wou'd I had dy'd e'er I had sent thee hence,
 E'er I had sav'd thee from the tyrant's hand!
 Wou'd thou had'st dy'd thyself that dreadful day,

And

Whoe'er she be. Orestes must already imagine that the person he talk'd to was one of his sisters; but as he had been so long absent could not be sure that it was Electra; the chorus soon after puts him out of doubt by mentioning her name.

And join'd thy murther'd father in the tomb,
 Rather than thus a wretched exile fall'n,
 Far from thy sister, in a foreign land !
 I was not there with pious hands to wash
 Thy breathless corps, or from the greedy flame
 To gather up thy ashes ; what have all
 My pleasing toils, my fruitless cares avail'd,
 Ev'n from thy infant years, that as a mother
 I watch'd thee still, and as a mother lov'd ?
 I wou'd not trust thee to a servant's hand,
 But was myself the guardian of thy youth,
 Thy dear companion ; all is gone with thee ;
 Alas ! thy death, like the devouring storm,
 Hath borne down all ; my father is no more,
 And thou art gone, and I am going too ;
 Our foes rejoice ; our mother, mad with joy,
 Smiles at our mis'ries ; that unnat'ral mother,

She

To wash thy breathless corps. The custom of washing the body of the deceased is very antient ; this office was always perform'd by the nearest relations ; Socrates as we are inform'd by Plato, wash'd himself before his execution, probably to prevent it's being done by strangers ; Alcestis, likewise, in Euripides, after she had determin'd to dye for her husband, washes herself. The Romans adopted this custom from the Greeks ; and we find the mother of Laryalus, making the same complaint as Electra,

Nec te tua funera mater
 Produxi, pressive oculos aut vulnera lavi.

VIRG. ÆN. l. 9.

She whom thou oft has promis'd to destroy;
 But cruel fate hath blasted all my hopes,
 And for my dear Orestes, left me nought
 But this poor shadow: O! th' accursed place,
 Where I had sent thee! O! my hapless brother,
 Thou hast destroy'd Electra; take me then,
 O! take me to thee! let this urn enclose
 My ashes too, and dust to dust be join'd,
 That we may dwell together once again;
 In life united by one hapless fate,
 I wou'd not wish in death to be divided;
 The dead are free from furrows.

C H O R U S.

Fair Electra!

Do not indulge thy griefs; but, O! remember,
 Sprung from a mortal like thyself, Orestes
 Was mortal too, that we are mortal all.

O R E S T E S.

[aside.]

What shall I say? I can refrain no longer.

E L E C T R A.

Why this emotion?

O R E S T E S.

Dust to dust. In the original, it is τὴν μνῆν εἰς τὴν μνῆν, "nothing to nothing;" I have taken the liberty to adopt a phrase familiar to ourselves, and which equally expresses the sense of my author.

O R E S T E S. [looking at Electra.]

Can it be Electra?

That lovely form?

E L E C T R A.

It is indeed that wretch.

O R E S T E S.

O! dreadful!

E L E C T R A.

Stranger, dost thou weep for me?

O R E S T E S.

By impious hands to perish thus!

E L E C T R A.

For me

Doubtless thou weep'st, for I am chang'd indeed.

O R E S T E S.

Of nuptial rites, and each domestic joy

To live depriv'd!

E L E C T R A.

Why dost thou gaze upon me?

O R E S T E S.

Alas! I did not know I was so wretched.

E L E C T R A.

Why, what hath made thee so?

O R E S T E S.

O R E S T E S.

I see thy woes.

E L E C T R A.

Not half of them.

O R E S T E S.

Can there be worse than these!

E L E C T R A.

To live with murtherers!

O R E S T E S.

What murth'ers, whom?

E L E C T R A.

The murth'ers of my father; bound to serve them,

O R E S T E S.

Who binds thee?

E L E C T R A.

One who calls herself a mother;

A name she little merits.

O R E S T E S.

But say, how?

Doth she withhold the means of life, or act

With brutal violence to thee?

E L E C T R A.

Both, alas!

Are my hard lot; she tries a thousand means

To make me wretched.

O R E S T E S.

And will none assist,

Will none defend thee?

E L E C T R A.

None. My only hope

Lies buried there.

O R E S T E S.

O! how I pity thee!

E L E C T R A.

'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me,
None but thyself; art thou indeed a stranger,
Or doth some nearer tye unite our sorrows?

O R E S T E S.

I cou'd unfold a tale; —but, say, these virgins,
May I depend on them?

E L E C T R A.

'They are our friends,

And faithful all.

O R S S T E S.

Then lay the urn aside,
And I will tell thee.

E L E C T R A.

Do not take it from me;

Do not, dear stranger.

O R E S T E S.

But I must indeed.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, I beg thee.

O R E S T E S.

Come, you'll not repent it.

E L E C T R A.

O! my poor brother! if thy dear remains
Are wrested from me, I am most unhappy.

O R E S T E S.

No more; thou must not grieve for him.

E L E C T R A.

Not grieve

For my Orestes?

O R E S T E S.

No; you shou'd not weep.

E L E C T R A.

Am I unworthy of him then?

O R E S T E S.

O! no!

But do not grieve.

E L E C T R A.

Not when I bear the ashes

Of my dear brother!

O R E S T E S.

But, they are not there,
Unless by fiction, and a well-wrought tale
That hath deceiv'd thee.

E L E C T R A.

Where then is his tomb?

O R E S T E S.

The living need none.

E L E C T R A.

Ha! what say'st thou?

O R E S T E S.

Truth.

E L E C T R A.

Does he then live?

O R E S T E S.

If I have life, he lives.

E L E C T R A.

And art thou he?

O R E S T E S.

Look here, and be convinc'd;

This

The living need none. The Greek is *τι ζωντος εν εσι ταφος*, which I have translated literally. Brumoy, who is seldom guilty of mistakes, has let the sense slip him, and only says, "il est plein de vie."

This mark, 'tis from our father.

E L E C T R A.

O! blest hour!

O R E S T E S.

Blessed indeed!

E L E C T R A.

Art thou then here?

O R E S T E S.

I am.

E L E C-

This mark. What this mark was, has greatly puzzled the commentators; the scholiasts, whose conjectures are generally whimsical, will needs have it to be some remains of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, which was visible in all his descendants, as those of Cadmus were mark'd with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius, and after him Brumoy, call it a ring, or seal, which indeed is the most natural interpretation of the Greek word *σφραγίς*; though it may be said in support of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and therefore a better proof of identity in regard to the person of Orestes.

Art thou then here? This discovery is doubtless the principal and most interesting scene in the tragedy of Electra, and upon the whole much better conducted by Sophocles than by either of his rivals on the same subject. The effect which it had upon the audience, was, we may imagine, equal to its merit. Aulus Gellius tells us a remarkable story of a certain actor, named Polus, who having undertaken the part of Electra, in order to enter more fully into the character he was to represent, brought upon the stage an urn containing the ashes of his own son, which he wept over and embraced as the ashes of Orestes; his feelings were so intense, and his performance so exquisite on this occasion, that the spectators no longer consider'd it as a mere representation, but were fill'd with real grief, and dissolved in tears.

Dacier is of opinion that the dialogue between Orestes and Electra on this occasion, is too prolix, and must be shorten'd before it could meet with any applause on a modern theatre.

E L E C T R A.

Do I embrace thee?

O R E S T E S.

May'st thou do it long!

E L E C T R A.

O! my companions! O! my dearest friends!

Do ye not see Orestes, once by art

And cruel fiction torn from Life and me,

But now by better art to life restor'd?

C H O R U S.

Daughter, we do; and see 'midst all our woes

From ev'ry eye fast flow the tears of joy.

E L E C T R A.

O! ye are come, my friends, in happiest hour,

Ev'n to behold, to find again the man

Whom your souls wish'd for, ye are come.

C H O R U S.

We are;

But O! in silence hide thy joys, Electra.

E L E C T R A.

Wherefore in silence?

C H O R U S.

O! ye are come, &c. From this place, to that speech of Orestes which begins with, *spend not thy time, &c.* and which contains in the Greek near fifty short lines, the original is in Strophe and Antistrophe: I have made no change in the measure of the translation, for the reason given in a preceding note.

C H O R U S.

Left our foes within
Shou'd hear thee.

E L E C T R A.

Never, by the virgin pow'r
Of chaste Diana, will I hide my joys,
Nor meanly stoop to fear an idle throng
Of helpless women.

O R E S T E S.

Women have their pow'r,
And that thou know'ft.

E L E C T R A.

Alas! and so I do;
For O! thou hast call'd back the sad remembrance
Of that misfortune which admits no cure,
And ne'er can be forgot.

O R E S T E S.

A fitter time
May come when we must think of that.

E L E C T R A.

All times,

All hours are fit to talk of justice in,
And best the present, now when I am free.

O R E S T E S.

O R E S T E S.

Thou art so, be so still.

E L E C T R A.

What's to be done?

O R E S T E S.

Talk not, when prudence shou'd restrain thy tongue.

E L E C T R A.

Who shall restrain it? who shall bind Electra

To fearful silence, when Orestes comes?

When thus I see thee here, beyond my thoughts,

Beyond my hopes.

O R E S T E S.

The gods have sent me to thee;

They bid me come.

E L E C T R A.

Indeed? more grateful still

Is thy return; if by the gods command

Thou cam'st, the gods will sure protect thee here.

O R E S T E S.

I wou'd not damp thy joys, and yet I fear

Left they shou'd carry thee too far.

E L E C T R A.

O! no!

But after so long absence, thus return'd

To thy afflicted sister; sure thou woud'st not——

O R E S T E S.

Do what?

ELECTRA.

Thou woud'st not grudge me the dear pleasure
Of looking on thee.

O R E S T E S.

No; nor suffer any

To rob thee of it:

ELECTRA.

Shall I then?

O R E S T E S.

No doubt.

ELECTRA.

I hear that voice, my friends, I never thought
To hear again; ye know, when I receiv'd
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and sad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form, which never was forgotten.

O R E S T E S.

Spend not thy time in fruitless words, nor tell me
How Clytemnestra lives, nor how Ægisthus
Hath lavish'd all our wealth; the present hour

A a

Demands

Demands our strict attention; tell me how,
 Whether by fraud, or open force, our foes
 May best be vanquish'd; let no chearful smile
 Betray thee to thy mother; seem to grieve
 As thou wert wont; when we have done the deed,
 Joy shall appear, and we will smile in safety.

E L E C T R A.

Thy will is mine; not to myself I owe
 My present bliss, I have it all from thee,
 From thee, my brother; nor shou'd aught persuade me
 To give Orestes ev'n a moment's pain.
 That were ungrateful to th' indulgent pow'r,
 Who thus hath smil'd propitious. Know, Ægisthus
 Has left the palace; Clytæmnestra's there;
 And for thy needless fears that I shou'd smile,
 Or wear a chearful face, I never shall;
 Hatred so strong is rooted in my soul,
 The sight of them will make me sad enough.
 The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee,
 And add to the deceit; for flow they must,
 When I behold thee in one happy hour
 Thus snatch'd from life, and thus to life restor'd.
 I cou'd not hope it; O! 'tis passing strange!
 If from the tomb our father shou'd arise,

And

And fay he liv'd, I think I shou'd believe him;
 And O! when thou art come so far, 'tis fit
 I yield to thee in all, do thou direct
 My ev'ry step; but know, had I been left
 Alone, ev'n I wou'd not have fail'd in all,
 But conquer'd bravely, or as bravely fell.

O R E S T E S.

No more. I hear the footsteps as of one
 Coming this way.

E L E C T R A.

Strangers, go in, and bear
 That which with joy they cannot but receive,
 But which with joy they will not long possess.

S C E N E II.

G O V E R N O R of O R E S T E S, E L E C T R A,
 O R E S T E S, C H O R U S.

G O V E R N O R.

Madness and folly thus to linger here!
 Have ye no thought? is life not worth your care?
 Do ye not know the dangers that surround you?

A a 2

Had

Strangers, go in, &c. Electra, inform'd that some one was coming towards them, changes her tone and manner, and addresses Orestes and Pylades as strangers; what she says, we may observe, is purposely ambiguous, as she was apprehensive of being over-heard.

Had I not watch'd myself before the palace,
 E'er ye had enter'd, all your secret plan
 Had been discover'd to our foes within;
 Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy,
 And lengthen'd converse; 'tis not fitting now,
 Go in; away, delays are dangerous
 At such an hour; our fate depends upon it.

O R E S T E S.

May I with safety? is all well within?

G O V E R N O R.

None can suspect you.

O R E S T E S.

Spake you of my death

As we determin'd?

G O V E R N O R.

Living as thou art,

They do account thee one among the dead.

O R E S T E S.

And are they glad? what say they?

G O V E R N O R.

By and by

We'll talk of that; let it suffice, that all
 Is right within; and that which most they think so,
 May prove most fatal to them.

E L E C T R A. [pointing to the GOVERNOR.]

Who is this?

O R E S T E S.

Do you not know?

E L E C T R A.

I cannot recollect him.

O R E S T E S.

Not know the man to whom you trusted me?

Under whose care——

E L E C T R A.

When? how?

O R E S T E S.

To Phocis sent,

I 'scap'd the tyrant.

E L E C T R A.

Can it then be he,

Among the faithless only faithful found

When our dear father fell?

O R E S T E S.

It is the same.

E L E C T R A. [to the GOVERNOR.]

Dearest of men, great guardian of our race,

Art thou then here? thou, who hast fav'd us both

From

From countless woes ; swift were thy feet to bring
 Glad tidings to me, and thy hand stretch'd forth
 It's welcome succour ; but, O ! why deceive me ?
 Why woud'st thou kill me with thy dreadful tale,
 Ev'n when thou had'st such happiness in store ?
 Hail ! father, hail ! for I must call thee so,
 Know, thou hast been to me, in one short day,
 Both the most hated, and most lov'd of men.

G O V E R N O R.

No more of that ; we shall have time enough
 To talk of it hereafter ; let us go ;
 This is the hour ; the queen is now alone,
 And not a man within ; if ye delay,
 Expect to meet more formidable foes,
 In wisdom and in numbers far superior.

O R E S T E S.

We will not talk, my Pylades, but act.
 Let us go in ; but to the gods, who guard
 This place, be first due adoration paid.

E L E C T R A.

Hear then, Apollo, great Lycæan, hear Their

Swift were thy feet, &c. The expression in the original is remarkable, ἄσπερον ἔχων ποδῶν ὑπηρετήματα, dulcissimum habens pedum ministerium ; not unlike that of the prophet Isaiah, " how beautiful upon the mountains are the " feet of him that bringeth glad tidings !"

Hear then, Apollo, &c. Electra's prayer is made before the altar of Apollo, which stood at the entrance of the palace, where Clytæmnestra had paid her
devotions

Their humble pray'r! O! hear Electra too,
 Who with unsparing hand her choicest gifts
 Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars;
 Accept the little all which now remains
 For me to give, accept my humblest pray'rs,
 My vows, my adorations; smile propitious
 On all our counsels! O! assist us now,
 And shew mankind what punishment remains
 For guilty mortals from offended heav'n.

[Exeunt.]

C H O R U S:
 S T R O P H E.

Behold, he comes! the slaughter-breathing god
 Mars, ever thirsting for the murth'rer's blood;
 And see the dogs of war are close behind;

Nought

devotions in the former scene; this gives an air of solemnity to the action, and lessens the horror of the murder, by representing it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven.

Behold he comes &c. This is the fourth intermede or song of the chorus, and is supposed to divide the fourth and fifth acts; it is shorter, we may observe, than any of the rest, probably so contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the spectator, who is naturally eager to see the catastrophe; it is not therefore a time to amuse him with poetry and description, but to prepare him for the event; which is here done in a few words, finely adapted to that purpose.

The dogs of war. Κυνες ἀποκταί, gr. canes inevitabiles. Shakespear has exactly the same image, "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war."

See prologue to Henry the fifth,

Nought can escape their all-devouring rage;
 This did my conscious heart long since presage,
 And the fair dream that struck my raptur'd mind.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Th' avenger steals along with silent feet,
 And sharpen'd sword, to his paternal seat,
 His injur'd father's wrongs to vindicate;
 Conceal'd from all by Maia's fraudulent son,
 Who safe conducts him till the deed be done,
 Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate.

[Exeunt.

Maia's fraudulent son. Mercury was the god of fraud and treachery, and call'd *δολιξ*, or the deceiver; to him therefore was attributed all secret schemes and expeditions, good or bad. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar assistance in this place may likewise be accounted for from his relation to Myrtilus who was slain by Pelops.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

E L E C T R A.

O! my dear friends, they are about it now,
The deed is doing; but be still.

C H O R U S.

What deed?

How? where?

E L E C T R A.

She doth prepare the fun'ral banquet;

But they are not far from her.

B b

C H O R U S.

O! my dear friends, &c. To avoid the horror of a murder on the stage, which, however familiar to us, the ancients consider'd as shocking and disgusting, Sophocles has contriv'd that it shall be done within the palace; but as Electra had received no commands from the oracle to revenge the death of Agamemnon, there would have been an indecency and impropriety in making her a witness or accessory to the murder: she therefore leaves her brother to kill Clytæmnestra, and comes out; which at the same time gives her an opportunity of watching the arrival of Ægisthus, and preventing any interruption from him. The appearance of Electra on the stage in this place is absolutely necessary, as without it no reason could be assign'd for the return of Orestes; and thus the rest of the business of the drama must have been transacted out of sight of the audience, who would consequently remain strangers to the catastrophe.

The fun'ral banquet. The Greek is *λεβητα κοσμει*, *lebetem parat*, alluding to the *περισειπνον*, or funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytæmnestra was already preparing for Orestes, whom she supposed dead: but they, says she, are not far from her; that is, they who are preparing one for her. The sentence, we see, is purposely left unfinished.

C H O R U S.

Why then leave them?

E L E C T R A.

To watch Ægisthus, lest he steal upon us
And blast our purpose.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[Behind the scenes.]

O! I am betray'd!

My palace full of murth'ers; not a friend
Left to protect me.

E L E C T R A.

Some one cries within;

Did you not hear?

C H O R U S.

It is too horrible

For mortal ear; I tremble at the sound.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within]

Ægisthus, O! where art thou?

E L E C T R A.

Hark! again

The voice, and louder.

C L Y-

Some one cries within. Dacier puts these words into the mouth of one of the women that compose the chorus; because, (says he) Electra would never have said "*some one* cries out," as she knew it must be Clytæmnestra. The reader may take his choice in regard to this alteration; I have left it as it stands in the original, being a matter of no great consequence.

E L E C T R A:

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C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within.]

O! my child, my child!

Pity thy mother, pity her who bore thee.

E L E C T R A.

Be thine the pity which thou shewd'st to him,
And to his father.

C H O R U S.

O! unhappy kingdom!

O! wretched race! thy misery is full;

This day will finish all.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

[within]

O! I am wounded!

E L E C T R A.

Another stroke. Another, if thou can'st.

Bb 2

CLY-

O! unhappy kingdom! The chorus, though satisfied that Clytæmnestra deserved to die, and that this action of Orestes was commanded by the gods, are notwithstanding shock'd at the execution of it: they lament the present, and express their fear of future miseries in the house of Pelops: it is impossible, in their opinion, that a family could ever prosper where a wife had kill'd her husband, and a child murder'd his mother. There is something in this reflection striking and pathetic.

Another stroke, &c. "Ce mot fait fremir," (says Brumoy) "these words make one shudder." Dacier is likewise of opinion that all the art of the poet is insufficient to reconcile us to the fierceness of Electra. We cannot, (say these gentlemen) hear without horror a sister exhorting her brother to murder her own mother; nature starts at such inhumanity: Orestes should be revenged, but by some other hand. These, and many other accusations of the same kind, are brought against Sophocles, who stands indicted of cruelty by the French critics: their delicacy is, it seems, greatly shock'd at what they call the atrocity of the
action.

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Ah me! again!

E L E C T R A.

O! that Ægiffhus too

Groan'd with thee now.

C H O R U S.

Then vengeance is compleat.

The dead arife and fhed their murth'ers blood
In copious freams.

S C E N E II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES,
ELECTRA, CHORUS.

E L E C T R A.

Behold them here; their hands

Dropping with gore; a pious facrifice
To the great god of war. How is't Orestes?

O R E S T E S.

Tis very well; all's well, if there be truth

In

action. I am notwithstanding, of opinion, that the more indulgent English reader will acquit the poet, when he considers the manners and character of the people before whom the play was represented. The murderer of Clytæmnestra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore look'd on by the antients, however contrary to the dictates of nature, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itself, sufficient to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; besides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the story of Clytæmnestra, the persons concern'd in her death, and every circumstance attending it, was too well known to the whole audience to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.

In great Apollo's oracles, she's dead.

Thou need'st not fear a cruel mother now.

C H O R U S.

No more; Ægisthus comes.

E L E C T R A.

Instant go in;

Do ye not see him? joyful he returns.

C H O R U S.

Retire; thus far is right, go on, and prosper.

O R E S T E S.

Fear not, we'll do it.

C H O R U S.

But immediately.

O R E S T E S.

I'm gone.

[Exeunt Orestes, Pylades

E L E C T R A.

and Gov.]

For what remains here to be done,

Be it my care; I'll whisper in his ear

A few soft flatt'ring words, that he may rush

Unknowing down precipitate on ruin.

S C E N E III.

Æ G I S T H U S, E L E C T R A, C H O R U S.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Which of you knows ought of these Phocian guests,

Who

Which of you knows, &c. Clytemnestra, we are to suppose, on receiving the news of Orestes's death, had sent a message to Ægisthus to acquaint him with it; he returns home therefore immediately to enquire into the particulars.

Who come to tell us of Orestes' death?

You first I ask, Electra, once so proud

And fierce of soul; it doth concern you most;

And therefore you, I think, can best inform me.

E L E C T R A.

Yes I can tell thee; is it possible

I shou'd not know it? that were not to know

A circumstance of dearest import to me.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Where are they then?

E L E C T R A.

Within.

Æ G I S T H U S.

And spake they truth?

E L E C T R A.

They did; a truth not prov'd by words alone,

But facts undoubted.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Shall we see him then?

E L E C T R A.

Ay, and a dreadful sight it is to see.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Thou art not wont to give me so much joy;

Now I am glad indeed.

E L E C T R A.

Glad may'st thou be,
If aught there is in that can give thee joy.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Silence within, and let my palace gates
Be open'd all; that Argos and Mycenæ
May send her millions forth to view the fight;
And if there are who nourish idle hopes
That still Orestes lives, behold him here,
And learn submission, nor inflame the croud
Against their lawful sov'reign, lest they feel
An angry monarch's heaviest vengeance on them.

E L E C T R A.

Already I have learn'd the task, and yield
To pow'r superior.

S C E N E IV.

Opens and discovers the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA extended on a
bier, and cover'd with a veil.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES,
ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a croud
of SPECTATORS from the city.

Æ G I S T H U S.

What a fight is here!

O!

Glad may'st thou be. This speech of Electra, as well as that which goes before it, is purposely ambiguous; Ægisthus believes she is talking of Orestes, whilst she speaks of Clytæmnestra.

O! deity supreme! this cou'd not be
 But by thy will; and whether Nemefis
 Shall ftill o'ertake me for my crime, I know not.
 Take off the veil, that I may view him well;
 He was by blood ally'd, and therefore claims
 Our decent forrows.

O R E S T E S.

Take it off thyfelf;
 Tis not my office; thee it beft befits
 To fee and to lament.

Æ G I S T H U S.

And fo it does;
 And I will do't: fend Clytæmnefta hither. [taking off the veil.

O R E S T E S.

She is before thee.

Æ G I S T H U S.

This cou'd not be. The greek is *επεπρωμος*, which, literally tranflated, anfwers exactly to our phrafe, "it did not *fall out*."

Tis not my office. All duties paid to the dead were perform'd by the neareft relations; Oreftes, as fupposed to be a ft ranger, had no bufinefs with them; Ægithus therefore, himfelf, takes off the veil, which greatly heightens the furprize and horror of the catastrophe.

She is before thee. Of all the catastrophes, antient or modern, which I remember to have met with, this of Electra appears to me infinitely the moft interefting, natural, and truly dramatic. There cannot poffibly be a fpectacle more affecting than the fcene before us; a tyrant, murderer and adulterer, is represented as exulting on the death of the only perfon in the world whom
 he

ÆGISTHUS:

Ha! what do I see?

ORESTES.

Why, what's the matter? what affrights thee so?

Do you not see him?

ÆGISTHUS.

In what dreadful snare

Am I then fall'n?

ORESTES.

Dost thou not now behold

That thou art talking with the dead?

ÆGISTHUS.

Alas!

Too well I see it, and thou art—Orestes.

C c

O R E S T E S.

he had to fear, and whose dead body he expects to see before him; instead of this, on lifting up the veil, he is shock'd, not with the corps of Orestes, but that of his own wife; he perceives at once that Clytæmnestra is murder'd, that Orestes is alive and close to him, and that he has nothing to expect himself but immediate death: the sudden change of fortune to all the persons concern'd, the surprize and despair of Ægisthus, the joy and triumph in the countenances of Orestes and Electra, must altogether have exhibited a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael to execute: how it was acted on the Greek stage, we cannot pretend to determine, most probably with taste and judgment. Let the English reader conceive those inimitable actors, Quin, Garrick, and Cibber in the parts of Ægisthus, Orestes, and Electra, and from thence form to himself some idea of the effect which such a catastrophe would have on a British audience.

O R E S T E S.

So great a prophet thou, and guess so ill!

Æ G I S T H U S.

I know that I am lost, undone for ever;
But let me speak to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, Orestes;

No, not a word; what can a moment's space
Profit a wretch like him to death devoted?

Quick let him dye, and cast his carcase forth
To th' dogs and vultures; they will best perform
Fit obsequies for him: by this alone
We can be free and happy.

O R E S T E S.

Get thee in;

This is no time for talk; thy life, thy life.

Æ G I S T H U S.

So great a prophet &c. This is a sneer of Orestes, on his being discover'd by Ægisthus, who had the reputation of a prophet.

They will best perform &c. Amongst the Greeks, to be deprived of the rites of sepulture was accounted a punishment worse than death itself. The original doth not mention dogs and vultures, but only says, let him be given *ταφευσι*, scilicet pollinctoribus vel libitinariis, to the only buriers (if we may use the expression) that he deserves.

Æ G I S T H U S.

But why go in? if what thou mean'st to do
 Be just, what need of darkness to conceal it?
 Why not destroy me here?

O R E S T E S.

It is not thine

Now to command: hence to the fatal place
 Where our dear father fell, and perish there.

Æ G I S T H U S.

This palace then is doom'd to be the witness
 Of all the present, all the future woes
 Of Pelops' hapless race.

O R E S T E S.

Of thine, at least

C c 2

It

Hence to the fatal place &c. Ægisthus must be slain in the very spot where he kill'd Agamemnon; this heightens the justice of the action, and at the same time prevents the spilling of blood on the stage, which Sophocles judiciously avoids. The justice of Orestes puts us in mind of a similar passage in holy writ, "in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."

See 1 Kings, 21, 19.

Of thine at least &c. The ancients were of opinion, that the words of dying men were always prophetic; Ægisthus therefore perceiving that his death was determined, foretells the fate of Orestes, doom'd to be tormented for the murder of his mother; Orestes interrupts his speech, by assuring him that his own fate was unavoidable: the English reader will recollect a parallel

It shall be witness; that's my prophecy,
And a most true one.

Æ G I S T H U S.

'Tis not from thy father.

O R E S T E S.

Thou talk'st, and time is lost. Away.

Æ G I S T H U S.

I follow.

O R E S T E S.

Thou shalt go first.

Æ G I S T H U S.

Think'st thou I mean to fly?

O R E S T E S.

No; but I'd make thy end most bitter to thee
In ev'ry circumstance, nor let thee choose
The softest means. Were all like thee to perish
Who violate the laws, 'twou'd lessen much
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

parallel passage in Shakespear, where Richard the third cuts off the prophecies
of Henry the sixth, with

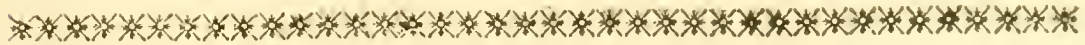
———Die, prophet, in thy speech;

For this among the rest was I ordain'd.

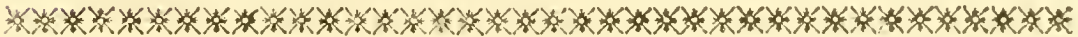
C H O R U S:

O! race of Atreus! after all thy woes,
How art thou thus by one advent'rous deed
To freedom and to happiness restor'd!

F I N I S,



PHILOCTETES.



Dramatis Personæ.

U L Y S S E S, king of Ithaca.

N E O P T O L E M U S, son of Achilles.

P H I L O C T E T E S, son of Pæan and companion of Hercules.

A S P Y.

H E R C U L E S.

C H O R U S

Composed of the companions of ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

S C E N E Lemnos, near a grotto, in a rock by the sea-side.

PHILOCTETES.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, ATTENDANT.

U L Y S S E S.

AT length, my noble friend, thou bravest son
Of a brave father, father of us all,
The great Achilles, we have reach'd the shore
Of sea-girt Lemnos, desart and forlorn,
Where never tread of human step is seen,
Or voice of mortal heard, save his alone,
Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched son,

D d

Whom

Poor Philoctetes, &c. It is reported of Philoctetes, that Hercules, at his death on mount Hyllus, bequeath'd to him, as a testimony of his esteem, his bow and arrows; the extraordinary virtues of which we shall find frequently alluded to in this piece. Philoctetes after this, being in search of an altar dedicated to his deceased friend, in the island of Chrysa, was there bit by a serpent; the wound fester'd, and an incurable ulcer ensued, notwithstanding which he proceeded

in

Whom here I left; for such were my commands
 From Grecia's chiefs, when by his fatal wound
 Oppress'd, his groans and execrations dreadful
 Alarm'd our hosts, our sacred rites profan'd,
 And interrupted holy sacrifice.
 But why shou'd I repeat the tale? the time
 Admits not of delay, we must not linger,
 Lest he discover our arrival here,
 And all our purpos'd fraud to draw him hence
 Be ineffectual; lend me then thy aid:

Surveying

in his voyage to assist at the siege of Troy; where the wound growing desperate, his continual cries and groans interrupted the motions of the war, and probably dishearten'd the soldiers; the Grecian chiefs therefore thought it adviseable to remove him from the army. A superstitious belief was instill'd into the multitude, that Philoctetes was struck by the hand of the gods with an incurable distemper; and Ulysses was order'd to carry him to Lemnos, an uninhabited island in the Ægean sea, and leave him there to the care of providence. In this miserable situation he remain'd for ten years; the Greeks in the mean time are inform'd by an oracle, that Troy could never be conquer'd without the arrows of Hercules, then in the possession of Philoctetes. Ulysses and Neoptolemus are dispatch'd with commands to bring him to the siege. The manner in which this expedition was conducted, and the means made use of by the artful Ulysses to gain the arrows of Hercules, constitute the subject of the tragedy; which though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and divested of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the same time in such amiable simplicity, such strength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may, perhaps, render it even more pleasing to the judicious and classical reader than those plays of Sophocles where the tale is apparently more interesting, and the manners much more similar to our own. The celebrated archbishop of Cambray was so struck with the story of Philoctetes, that he has taken the pains to weave it into his excellent work, where it forms a very beautiful episode.

See *Telemaque*, b. 15.

Surveying round thee, canst thou see a rock
 With double entrance; to the sun's warm rays
 In winter open, and in summer's heat
 Giving free passage to the welcome breeze?
 A little to the left, there is a fountain
 Of living water, where, if yet he breathes,
 He flakes his thirst; if aught thou see'st of this,
 Inform me; so shall each to each impart
 Council most fit, and serve our common cause.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[leaving Ulysses a little behind him.

If I mistake not, I behold a cave,
 Ev'n such as thou describ'st.

ULYSSES.

Dost thou? which way?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yonder it is; but no path leading thither,
 Or trace of human footstep.

ULYSSES.

In his cell

A chance but he hath lain him down to rest;
 Look if he hath not.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Not a creature there.

D d 2

ULYSSES.

P H I L O C T E T E S .

U L Y S S E S .

Nor food, nor mark of household preparation?

N E O P T O L E M U S .

A rustic bed of scatter'd leaves.

U L Y S S E S .

What more?

N E O P T O L E M U S .

A wooden bowl, the work of some rude hand,

With a few sticks for fuel.

U L Y S S E S .

This is all

His little treasure here.

N E O P T O L E M U S .

Unhappy man!

Some linen for his wounds.

U L Y S S E S .

This must be then

His place of habitation; far from hence

He cannot roam; distemper'd as he is,

It were impossible; he is but gone

A little way for needful food, or herb

Of pow'r to 'swage and mitigate his pain.

Wherefore dispatch this servant to some place

Of observation, whence he may espy

His ev'ry motion, lest he rush upon us.

There's not a Grecian whom his soul so much
Cou'd wish to crush beneath him as Ulysses.

[Makes a signal to the attendant, who retires.

S C E N E II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He's gone to guard each avenue; and now,
If thou hast aught of moment to impart
Touching our purpose, say it; I attend.

U L Y S S E S.

Son of Achilles, mark me well; remember
What we are doing, not on strength alone,
Or courage, but on conduct will depend;
Therefore if aught uncommon be propos'd,
Strange to thy ears, and adverse to thy nature,
Reflect that 'tis thy duty to comply,
And act conjunctive with me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well! what is it?

U L Y S S E S.

We must deceive this Philoctetes; that
Will be thy task; when he shall ask thee who
And what thou art, Achilles' son, reply;

Thus

Thus far within the verge of truth, no more ;
 Add, that resentment fir'd thee to forsake
 The Grecian fleet, and seek thy native soil,
 Unkindly us'd by those who long with vows
 Had fought thy aid to humble haughty Troy,
 And when thou cam'st, ungrateful as they were,
 The arms of great Achilles, thy just right,
 Gave to Ulysses; here thy bitter taunts
 And sharp invectives lib'rally bestow
 On me; say what thou wilt, I shall forgive,
 And Greece will not forgive thee if thou dost not;
 For against Troy thy efforts all are vain
 Without his arrows: safely thou may'st hold
 Friendship and converse with him, but I cannot.
 Thou wert not with us when the war began,
 Nor bound by solemn oath to join our host
 As I was; me he knows, and if he find
 That I am with thee, we are both undone.
 They must be ours then, these all-conquering arms;

Remember

The arms of great Achilles. The contest concerning the arms of Achilles was solely between Ajax and Ulysses; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid any claim to them. As Philoctetes however had been absent during the whole affair, Ulysses was at liberty to substitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, especially as his being the son of Achilles naturally justified his pretensions to the arms of his father; the fiction therefore was probable.

These all-conquering arms. A dispute concerning a bow and arrows may probably seem to a modern critic but an unpromising subject for a tragedy; but the

Remember that. I know, thy noble nature
 Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud ;
 But what a glorious prize is victory !
 Therefore be bold ; we will be just hereafter.
 Give to deceit and me a little portion
 Of one short day, and for thy future life
 Be call'd the holiest, worthiest, best of men.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What but to hear alarms my conscious soul,
 Son of Laertes, I shall never practise.
 I was not born to flatter or betray ;
 Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports)
 Who gave me birth ; what open arms can do
 Behold me prompt to act, but ne'er to fraud
 Will I descend ; sure we can more than match

In

the defenders of Sophocles must desire him to recollect, that on those arrows, however uninteresting the circumstance may at first appear, depended no less than the fate of a whole nation ; politically consider'd therefore, it was a point of the utmost consequence ; if the poet had not thought so, he would certainly have been inexcusable in bringing down a deity at last, as we shall see in the catastrophe, to determine it.

We will be just hereafter. This advice is put with great propriety into the mouth of the artful Ulysses, who, like other subtle pandars to vice, persuades his friend to the commission of a crime, and at the same time proposes the palliative of future repentance and virtue. An evasive and subtle excuse for guilt, which has perhaps done more injury to the cause of religion and truth than any other whatever. Neoptolemus answers it with all the honest indignation that such a sentiment deserved. The characters, we may observe of the two heroes, are finely contrasted, and serve like light and shade, greatly to animate and enliven the whole beautiful picture.

In strength a foe thus lame and impotent.
 I came to be a helpmate to thee, not
 A base betrayer; and O! king, believe me,
 Rather, much rather would I fall by virtue,
 Than rise by guilt to certain victory.

U L Y S S E S.

O! noble youth, and worthy of thy fire,
 When I like thee was young, like thee of strength
 And courage boastful, little did I deem
 Of human policy; but long experience
 Hath taught me, son, 'tis not the pow'rful arm
 But soft enchanting tongue that governs all.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And thou woud'st have me tell an odious falsehood?

U L Y S S E S.

He must be gain'd by fraud.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By fraud? and why

Not by persuasion?

U L Y S S E S.

He'll not listen to it;

And force were vainer still.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What mighty pow'r

Hath he to boast?

U L Y S S E S.

U L Y S S E S.

His arrows wing'd with death

Inevitable.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Then it were not safe

Ev'n to approach him.

U L Y S S E S.

No; unless by fraud

He be secur'd.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And think'st thou 'tis not safe

To tell a lye then?

U L Y S S E S.

Not if on that lye

Depends our safety.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Who shall dare to tell it

E e

Without

Think'st thou 'tis not safe &c. The character of Neoptolemus is copied from that of his father, who is represented by Homer as of an open and ingenuous disposition, and a foe to lying and dissimulation; in the ninth book of the Iliad, he cries out,

Εχθρος γαρ μοι κεινος ὁμως αἶσα πύλησιν,
Ὅς δ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθει ἐν φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βάζει.

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My heart detests him as the gates of hell.

POPE.

words that deserve, though from a heathen writer, to be written in letters of gold, and graven, as Solomon says, in the tablets of the heart.

Without a blush?

U L Y S S E S.

We need not blush at aught
That may promote our int'rest and success.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But where's the int'rest that shou'd bias me?
Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught
To Neoptolemus?

U L Y S S E S.

Troy cannot fall

Without his arrows.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Said'st thou not, that I
Was destin'd to destroy her?

U L Y S S E S.

Without them
Nought canst thou do, and they without thee nothing.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Then I must have them.

U L Y S S E S.

When thou hast, remember

A

Then I must have them. The struggle between ambition and virtue in the breast of Neoptolemus, is natural and affecting. The subtle Ulysses had discover'd that his foible was the love of glory, and therefore attacks him in the only part where he was open to persuasion. The virtue of Neoptolemus staggers at the reward propos'd, and he submits to a treachery which his soul abhors.

A double prize awaits thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

The glorious names of valiant and of wife.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or shame
No more appall me.

ULYSSES.

Wilt thou do it then?

Wilt thou remember what I told thee of?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't; I have promis'd; that's sufficient:

ULYSSES.

Here then remain thou; I must not be seen;

If thou stay long, I'll send a faithful spy

Who in a sailor's habit well disguis'd

May pass unknown; of him, from time to time,

What best may suit our purpose thou shalt know.

I'll to the ship; farewell; and may the god

Who brought us here, the fraudulent Mercury,

And great Minerva, guardian of our country,

And ever kind to me, protect us still.

[Exeunt.

E e 2

SCENE

The fraudulent Mercury. See note in *Electra*, p. 184.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S, N E O P T O L E M U S.

C H O R U S.

Master, instruct us, strangers as we are,
 What we may utter, what we must conceal.
 Doubtless the man we seek will entertain
 Suspicion of us; how are we to act?
 To those alone belongs the art to rule,
 Who bear the scepter from the hand of Jove;
 To thee of right devolves the pow'r supreme,
 From thy great ancestors deliver'd down;
 Speak then, our royal lord, and we obey.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

If you wou'd penetrate yon deep recess
 To see the cave where Philoctetes lyes,

Go

Master, instruct us &c. According to the original design of the chorus, their chief business was to take the part of distress'd virtue; to counter-act the bad effects that might arise from vicious characters, and to draw moral inferences from the action of the drama: they are generally therefore, as in the two preceding plays of Ajax and Electra, attendants on, and friends to the hero or heroine of the piece; a propriety which the subject of the tragedy before us would by no means admit, the distress of Philoctetes arising in a great measure from his being left alone in the island; the chorus, for this reason, is compos'd not of the friends of the hero, but the soldiers and followers of Ulysses and Neoptolemus; we must not be surpris'd therefore to find them conspiring with their masters to deceive Philoctetes, and throughout the play aiding and assisting the designs of their commanders; they, notwithstanding, perform the officium virile prescribed by Horace, and express their pity and concern for the man, whom it is not in their power to relieve.

Go forward; but remember to return
 When the poor wand'rer comes this way, prepar'd
 To aid our purpose here, if need require.

C H O R U S.

O! king, we ever meant to fix our eyes
 On thee, and wait attentive to thy will;
 But, tell us, in what part is he conceal'd?
 'Tis fit we know the place, lest unobserv'd
 He rush upon us; which way doth it lye?
 See'st thou his footsteps leading from the cave,
 Or hither bent?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

[advancing towards the cave;

Behold the double door
 Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.

C H O R U S.

And whither is its wretched master gone?

N E O P T O L E M U S:

Doubtless in search of food, and not far off;
 For such his manner is; accustom'd here,
 So fame reports, to pierce with winged arrows
 His savage prey for daily sustenance,
 His wound still painful, and no hope of cure.

C H O R U S;

C H O R U S.

Alas! I pity him; without a friend,
 Without a fellow-suff'rer, left alone,
 Depriv'd of all the mutual joys that flow
 From sweet society, distemper'd too;
 How can he bear it? O! unhappy race
 Of mortal man! doom'd to an endless round
 Of sorrows, and immeasurable woe!
 Second to none in fair nobility
 Was Philoctetes, of illustrious race;
 Yet here he lyes, from ev'ry human aid
 Far off remov'd in dreadful solitude,
 And mingles with the wild and savage herd;
 With them in famine and in misery
 Consumes his days, and weeps their common fate
 Unheeded, save when babbling echo mourns
 In bitt'rest notes responsive to his woe.

N E O P-

Alas! I pity him, &c. The lamentation of the chorus in this scene, as it stands in the original, is in Strophe and Antistrophe, and was therefore most probably, as I have before observed, set to music and sung; but as it makes at the same time part of their conversation with Neoptolemus, I could not throw it into ode or rhyme without interrupting the narration, and giving a motley appearance to the dialogue; I have therefore left it in blank verse. The description of Philoctetes's distress, in this passage, is in the Greek inimitably beautiful, which I have endeavour'd to give my readers some imperfect idea of in the translation.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And yet I wonder not; for if aright
 I judge, from angry heav'n the sentence came;
 And Chrysa was the cruel source of all;
 Nor doth this sad disease inflict him still
 Incurable, without assenting gods;
 For so they have decreed, lest Troy shou'd fall
 Beneath his arrows e'er th' appointed time
 Of it's destruction come.

CHORUS.

No more, my son;

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What sayst thou?

CHORUS.

Sure I heard a dismal groan
 Of some afflicted wretch.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Which way?

CHORUS.

From angry heav'n, &c. The story of Philoctetes, as related in the fifteenth book of Telemachus, differs from that of Sophocles in this particular; Philoctetes there informs Telemachus that he drop'd by chance one of the arrows of Hercules on his own foot, and that the wound remain'd for a long time incurable. He likewise attributes this misfortune and all the distress, which he suffer'd at Lemnos, to his crime in discovering to Ulysses the place where Hercules dæd, and which he had solemnly sworn to conceal. The gods therefore punish'd him for his perjury.

C H O R U S.

ev'n now

I hear it, and the sound as of some step
 Slow-moving this way, he is not far from us;
 His plaints are louder now; prepare, my son.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

For what?

C H O R U S.

New troubles; for behold he comes;
 Not like the shepherd with his rural pipe
 And chearful song, but groaning heavily;
 Either his wounded foot against some thorn
 Hath struck, and pains him sorely, or perchance
 He hath espied from far some ship attempting
 To enter this inhospitable port,
 And hence his cries to save it from destruction.

[Exeunt.

Not like the shepherd, &c. Otway has caught this image in his Orphan.

“Sweet as the shepherd’s pipe upon the mountain.”

End of A C T I.

A C T II.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SAY, welcome strangers, what disastrous fate
 Led you to this inhospitable shore,
 Nor haven safe, nor habitation fit
 Affording ever? of what clime, what race?
 Who are ye? speak; if I may trust that garb
 Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
 My much-lov'd country; let me hear the sound
 Of your long-wish'd for voices; do not look
 With horror on me, but in kind compassion
 Pity a wretch deserted and forlorn

F f

In

Say, welcome strangers, &c. The absurdity of dividing the Greek tragedies into five acts, which is perpetually recurring to us, appears remarkably evident in this place. Brumoy was obliged to make this the beginning of the second act, though it is apparent the stage is not empty. Philoctetes enters to Neoptolemus and the Chorus whilst they are talking of him. There was, however, no other method of dividing the play without making the first act three times as long as any of the rest; I have therefore follow'd this division merely for a pause to the English reader.

Do not look, &c. Philoctetes, we may naturally imagine, after ten years stay on an uninhabited island, made but an uncouth and savage appearance; this address to the chorus therefore, who are shock'd at his figure, is extremely natural, as is indeed almost every thing which Sophocles puts into the mouths of every character in the drama.

In this sad place; O! if ye come as friends,
 Speak then, and answer, hold some converse with me,
 For this at least from man to man is due.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Know, stranger, first what most thou seem'st to wish;
 We are of Greece.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! happiness to hear!

After so many years of dreadful silence,
 How welcome was that sound! O! tell me, son,
 What chance, what purpose, who conducted thee?
 What brought thee hither, what propitious gale?
 Who art thou? tell me all; inform me quickly.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Native of Scyros, thither I return;
 My name is Neoptolemus, the son
 Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Dear is thy country, and thy father dear
 To me, thou darling of old Lycomedes;
 But tell me in what fleet, and whence thou cam'st.

N E O P-

Native of Scyros, &c. Scyros was an island in the Ægean sea, of which Lycomedes was king; hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war, and falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughter, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwise call'd Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him the "darling of old Lycomedes."

NEOPTOLEMUS.

From Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

From Troy? I think thou wert not with us,
When first our fleet sail'd forth.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wert thou then there?

Or know'st thou aught of that great enterprize?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not then the man whom you behold?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How shou'd I know whom I had never seen?

PHILOCTETES.

Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?

Hath my sad story never reach'd your ear?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Never.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! how hateful to the gods,

How very poor a wretch must I be then,

That Greece shou'd never hear of woes like mine!

But they who sent me hither, they conceal'd them,

And smile triumphant, whilst my cruel wounds

Grow deeper still. O! sprung from great Achilles,

Behold before thee Pæan's wretched son,
 With whom, a chance but thou hast heard, remain
 The dreadful arrows of renown'd Alcides,
 Ev'n the unhappy Philoctetes, him
 Whom the Atridæ and the vile Ulyffes
 Inhuman left, diftemper'd as I was
 By the envenom'd serpent's deep-felt wound ;
 Soon as they faw that, with long toil opprefs'd,
 Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock,
 There did they leave me when from Chryfa's fhore
 They bent their fatal courfe; a little food
 And thefe few rags were all they wou'd beftow;
 Such one day be their fate! Alas! my fon,
 How dreadful, think'ft thou, was that waking to me,
 When from my fleep I rofe and faw them not!
 How did I weep! and mourn my wretched ftate!

When

How did I weep, &c. The character of Melifander in the Agamemnon of Thompson, is a clofe imitation of the Philoctetes. Our excellent defcriptive poet has there transfused the fpirit of Sophocles, and painted the miferies of folitude in the warmeft colours. Thompson even improves on the paffage before us in the following lines, which are fo beautiful that I cannot help tranfcribing them.

Caft on the wildeft of the Cyclad ifles,
 Where never human foot had mark'd the fhore,
 Thefe ruffians left me——yet, believe me, Arcas,
 Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
 All ruffians as they were, I never heard

A found fo difmal as their parting oars. See Thomp. Agam. act 3:
 The fentiment in the two laft lines is remarkably natural and pathetic; but I refer my readers to the play itfelf, which abounds in many fine imitations of the antient tragedy,

When not a ship remain'd of all the fleet
 That brought me here; no kind companion left
 To minister or needful food or balm
 To my sad wounds: on ev'ry side I look'd,
 And nothing saw but woe; of that indeed
 Measure too full: for day succeeded day,
 And still no comfort came; myself alone
 Cou'd to myself the means of life afford,
 In this poor grotto; on my bow I liv'd:
 The winged dove, which my sharp arrow flew,
 With pain I brought into my little hut,
 And feasted there; then from the broken ice
 I tak'd my thirst, or crept into the wood
 For useful fuel; from the stricken flint
 I drew the latent spark, that warms me still,
 And still revives, this with my humble roof
 Preserve me, son; but O! my wounds remain!
 Thou see'st an island desolate and waste;
 No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt,

Not

The winged dove, &c.

Herbs were my food, those blessed stores of health;
 Only, when winter from my daily search
 Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
 In faithless snares to seize, which truly griev'd me,
 My sylvan friends, that ne'er till then had known,
 And therefore dreaded less, the tyrant man.

See Thompson's *Agamemnon*;

Nor hoſt to welcome in the traveller;
 Few ſeek the wild inhospitable ſhore.
 By adverſe winds, ſometimes th' unwilling gueſts,
 As well thou mayſt ſuppoſe, were hither driv'n;
 But when they came, they only pity'd me,
 Gave me a little food, or better garb
 To ſhield me from the cold; in vain I pray'd
 That they wou'd bear me to my native ſoil,
 For none wou'd liſten: here for ten long years
 Have I remain'd, whilſt miſery and famine
 Keep fresh my wounds, and double my miſfortune.
 'This have th' Atridæ and Ulyſſes done,
 And may the gods with equal woes repay them!

C H O R U S.

O! ſon of Pæan, well might thoſe, who came
 And ſaw thee thus, in kind compaſſion weep;
 I too muſt pity thee; I can no more.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I can bear witneſs to thee, for I know
 By ſad experience what th' Atridæ are,
 And what, Ulyſſes.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Haſt thou ſuffer'd then?
 And doſt thou hate them too?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! that these hands
 Cou'd vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ then
 And Sparta shou'd confess that Scyros boasts
 Of sons as brave and valiant as their own.

PHILOCTETES.

O! noble youth! but wherefore cam'st thou hither?
 Whence this resentment?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will tell thee all,
 If I can bear to tell it: know then, soon
 As great Achilles dy'd——

PHILOCTETES.

——O! stay, my son,
 Is then Achilles dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is, and not
 By mortal hand, but by Apollo's shaft
 Fell glorious.

PHILOC-

Mycenæ then and Sparta, &c. Two cities of Peloponnesus. Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menæus, the former of whom was king of Mycenæ, and the latter of Sparta.

By Apollo's shaft. Homer, and after him Virgil, makes Phœbus assist Paris in the death of Achilles, by wounding him with an arrow in the heel, the only part of him that was vulnerable.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! most worthy of each other,
 The slayer and the slain! permit me, son,
 To mourn his fate, e'er I attend to thine. [he weeps.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! thou need'st not weep for other's woes,
 Thou hast enough already of thy own.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Thus then it was. Soon as Achilles dy'd,
 Phœnix, the guardian of his tender years,
 Instant fail'd forth, and fought me out at Scyros;
 With him the wary chief Ulysses came;
 They told me then (or true or false I know not)
 My father dead, by me, and me alone
 Proud Troy must fall; I yielded to their pray'rs;
 I hop'd to see at least the dear remains
 Of him, whom living I had long in vain
 Wish'd to behold; safe at Sigeum's port
 Soon we arriv'd; in crowds the num'rous host
 Throng'd to embrace me, call'd the gods to witness
 In me once more they saw their lov'd Achilles

To

To life restor'd; but he alas! was gone.
 I shed the duteous tear, then fought my friends
 Th' Atridæ, (friends I thought 'em) claim'd the arms
 Of my dead father, and what else remain'd
 His late possession, when, O! cruel words!
 And wretched I to hear them! thus they answer'd;
 "Son of Achilles, thou in vain demand'st
 "Those arms already to Ulysses giv'n;
 "The rest be thine;" I wept; and is it thus,
 Indignant I reply'd, ye dare to give
 My right away? Know, boy, Ulysses cry'd,
 That right was mine, and therefore they bestow'd
 The boon on me, me who preserv'd the arms
 And him who bore them too. With anger fir'd
 At this proud speech, I threaten'd all that rage
 Cou'd dictate to me, if he not return'd them.
 Stung with my words, yet calm, he answer'd me;
 Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place,
 Where thou shou'dst not have been; and since thou mean'st
 To brave me thus, know, thou shalt never bear

G g

Those

And him who bore them. Ulysses was reported to have taken away the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle to the Grecian camp. Ovid mentions this in his account of the contest,

His humeris, his inquam humeris, ego corpus Achillis
 Et simul arma tuli. Meta. book 15.

Those arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis resolv'd.
 Thus injur'd, thus depriv'd of all I held
 Most precious, by the worst of men, I left
 The hateful place, and seek my native soil;
 Nor do I blame so much the proud Ulysses
 As his base masters: army, city, all
 Depend on those who rule: when men grow vile
 The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked.
 I've told thee all, and him who hates th' Atridæ
 I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

O earth! thou mother of great Jove,
 Embracing all with universal love,
 Author benign of ev'ry good,
 Thro' whom Pactolus rolls his golden flood,
 To thee, whom in thy rapid car
 Fierce lions draw, I rose and made my pray'r,

To

O! earth, &c. This is an occasional song of the chorus, which is very short, consisting only of a strophe of thirteen lines in the original; we shall find the antistrophe at a considerable distance from it, breaking the dialogue in a manner very uncommon.

Embracing all, &c. The earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea and Vesta, call'd the mother of the gods, was worship'd in Phrygia and Lybia, where the river Pactolus is said to have enrich'd Cræsus with its sands. Cybele is represented by the poets as drawn by lions.

To thee I made my sorrows known,
 When from Achilles' injur'd son
 Th' Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day
 When proud Ulysses bore his arms away.

PHILOCTETES.

I wonder not, my friend, to see you here,
 And I believe the tale; for well I know
 The men who wrong'd you, know the base Ulysses;
 Falsehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and nought
 That's just or good can be expected from him;
 But strange it is to me, that Ajax present
 He dare attempt it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ajax is no more;
 Had he been living, I had ne'er been spoil'd
 Thus of my right,

PHILOCTETES.

Is he then dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! the son of Tydeus, and that slave,

G g 2

Sold

Son of Tydeus. Diomedes.

Sold by his father Sisyphus, they live,
Unworthy as they are.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! they do,

And flourish still.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

My old and worthy friend

The Pylian sage, how is he? he cou'd see
Their arts, and wou'd have giv'n them better counfels.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Weigh'd down with grief he lives, but, most unhappy,
Weeps his lost son, his dear Antilochus.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! double woe! whom I cou'd most have wish'd
To live and to be happy, those to perish!
Ulysses to survive! it shou'd not be.

N E O P-

Sold by his father, &c. It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Laertes after her marriage with Sisyphus, and when she was with child of Ulysses, for which Sisyphus the first husband received a sum of money; Ulysses therefore was often reproach'd with being the son of Sisyphus.

See a note in Ajax, p. 15.

The Pylian sage. Nestor, king of Pylos. Agamemnon had such an opinion of his wisdom that Homer makes him say, if he had ten such counsellors Troy would soon fall before him.

Weeps his lost son. Antilochus was slain by Memnon in the Trojan war.

See Homer's Od. b. 4.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! 'tis a subtle foe; but deepest plans
May sometimes fail.

PHILOCTETES.

Where was Patroclus then,
Thy father's dearest friend?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He too was dead.

In war, alas! so fate ordains it ever,
The coward 'scapes, the brave and virtuous fall.

PHILOCTETES.

It is too true; and now thou talk'st of cowards,
Where is that worthless wretch, of readiest tongue,
Subtle and voluble?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! 'tis a subtle foe. The original is

Σοφος παλαισῆς κεινός. ἀλλὰ χαί σοφαι
Γνωμαι, Φιλοκτητῆ, ἐμποδιζονται θαλα.

which Brumoy translates thus, ' Antiloque étoit brave, mais la valeur est souvent mal récompensée, 'Antilochus was brave, but valour is often ill-rewarded.' The sense of this passage, says he, is doubtful, but it certainly alludes to Antilochus. With all due deference to Mr. Brumoy's judgment, I cannot help thinking that he is here mistaken. Philoctetes had just observed that Ulysses still lived; and Neoptolemus immediately answers, ' O! he is a subtle foe,' Σοφος παλαισῆς, ' a cunning wrestler.' Sophocles must certainly mean Ulysses, for how can Σοφος (according to Brumoy's translation) signify brave, or Σοφαι γνωμαι be interpreted valour? Thomson had apparently this very passage in his eye, when he makes Melifander say,

“ Malice often over-shoots itself.”

P H I L O C T E T E S.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Ulyffes?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

No;

Therfites; ever talking, never heard.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I have not feen him, but I hear he lives.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I did not doubt it: evil never dyes;

The gods take care of that: if aught there be

Fraudful and vile, 'tis fafe; the good and juft

Perifh unpity'd by them; wherefore is it?

When gods do ill, why fhould we worship them?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Since thus it is, fince virtue is opprefs'd,

And vice triumphant, who deferve to live

Are doom'd to perifh, and the guilty reign;

Henceforth, O! fon of Pæan, far from Troy

And the Atridæ will I live remote.

I

Therfites. For the character of Therfites, fee Homer's iliad, b. 2.

Since thus it is &c. Addison had probably this paffage in view, when he makes his Cato fay,

“ When vice prevails, and impious men bear fway,
“ The poft of honour is a private ftation.”

I wou'd not see the man I cannot love.
 My barren Scyros shall afford me refuge,
 And home-felt joys delight my future days:
 So, fare thee well, and may th' indulgent gods
 Heal thy sad wound, and grant thee ev'ry wish
 Thy soul can form; once more, farewell. I go,
 The first propitious gale.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

What! now, my son?

So soon?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Immediately; the time demands
 We shou'd be near, and ready to depart.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Now, by the mem'ry of thy honour'd fire,
 By thy lov'd mother, by whate'er remains
 On earth most dear to thee, O! hear me now,
 Thy suppliant; do not, do not thus forsake me,
 Alone, oppress'd, deserted, as thou see'st,
 In this sad place; I shall, I know I must be
 A burthen to thee, but, O! bear it kindly,
 For ever doth the noble mind abhor
 Th' ungen'rous deed, and loves humanity;
 Disgrace attends thee if thou dost forsake me.

If

If not, immortal fame rewards thy goodness.
 Thou mayst convey me safe to OËta's shores
 In one short day; I'll trouble you no longer;
 Hide me in any part where I may least
 Molest you. Hear me; by the guardian god
 Of the poor suppliant, all-protecting Jove,
 I beg, behold me at thy feet, infirm,
 And wretched as I am, I clasp thy knees;
 Leave me not here then, where there is no mark
 Of human footstep; take me to thy home,
 Or to Eubœa's port, to OËta, thence
 Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks
 Of Sperchius' gentle stream, to meet my father,
 If yet he lives; for, oh! I beg'd him oft
 By those who hither came, to fetch me hence.
 Or he is dead, or they neglectful bent
 Their hasty course to their own native soil.
 Be thou my better guide; pity and save
 The poor and wretched. Think, my son, how frail
 And full of danger is the state of man,

Now

Hide me in any place. The original says, "throw me into the sink, "foredeck, or stern;" there was no necessity of specifying these in the translation.

To Eubœa's port &c. Eubœa was a large island in the Ægean sea, now call'd Negropont. OËta, a mountain in Thessaly, now call'd Bunina.

Now prosp'rous, now adverse; who feels no ills
 Shou'd therefore fear them; and when fortune smiles
 Be doubly cautious, lest destruction come
 Remorseless on him, and he fall unpitied.

CHORUS.

O! pity him, my lord, for bitt'rest woes
 And trials most severe he hath recounted;
 Far be such sad distress from those I love!
 O! if thou hat'st the base Atridæ, now
 Revenge thee on them, serve their deadliest foe;
 Bear the poor suppliant to his native soil;
 So shalt thou bless thy friend, and 'scape the wrath
 Of the just gods, who still protect the wretched.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Your proffer'd kindness, friends, may cost you dear;
 When you shall feel his dreadful malady
 Oppress you sore, you will repent it.

CHORUS.

Never

Shall that reproach be ours.

Hh

NEOP-

When fortune smiles, &c. This is almost literally translated, and the exact sense of the original. Brumoy has added "c'est alors qu'il est beau de secourir les malheureux," "this is the time when it most becomes us to succour the unhappy;" a sentiment not improper in the mouth of Philoctetes, but which is not in Sophocles.

O! pity him, &c. This, in the original, is the antistrophe to the little song of the chorus, which I took notice of p. 226. The reason why I have not put it into the same measure as the other is sufficiently obvious.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

In gen'rous pity

Of the afflicted thus to be o'ercome
 Were most disgraceful to me; he shall go.
 May the kind gods speed our departure hence,
 And guide our vessels to the wish'd-for shore!

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! happy hour! O! kindest, best of men!
 And you my dearest friends! how shall I thank you?
 What shall I do to shew my grateful heart?
 Let us be gone, but O! permit me first
 To take a last farewell of my poor hut,
 Where I so long have liv'd; perhaps you'll say
 I must have had a noble mind to bear it;
 The very sight to any eyes but mine
 Were horrible, but sad necessity
 At length prevail'd, and made it pleasing to me.

C H O R U S.

One from our ship, my lord, and with him comes
 A stranger; stop a moment till we hear
 Their bus'ness with us.

Enter a SPY in the habit of a merchant, with another Grecian.

S C E N E

The wish'd-for shore. In the original, 'the place which we wish to sail to.' The expression, we see, is purposely ambiguous; Neoptolemus means Troy, and Philoctetes understands it as spoken of Scyros, his native country.

My poor hut. The Greek is *αοικον εισοικησιν*, 'my uninhabitable habitation;' this would not bear a literal translation.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS, SPY,
S P Y.

Son of great Achilles,

Know, chance alone hath brought me hither, driv'n
By adverse winds to where thy vessels lay,
As home I sail'd from Troy; there did I meet
This my companion, who inform'd me where
Thou might'st be found: hence to pursue my course
And not to tell thee what concerns thee near
Had been ungen'rous, thou perhaps mean time
Of Greece and of her counsels nought suspecting,
Counsels against thee not by threats alone
Or words enforc'd, but now in execution.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by my virtue, stranger, for thy news
I am much bound to thee, and will repay
Thy service; tell me what the Greeks have done.

H h 2

SPY.

Son of great Achilles, &c. This spy is probably the same person who made his appearance in the first scene, and was sent out to watch for Philoctetes. Ulysses sends him back in the disguise of a merchant, to carry on the plot, and hasten as much as possible the departure of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Ulysses had already desired Neoptolemus to frame his answers according to the hints given him by the spy, and to act in concert with him; Neoptolemus, therefore, purposely turns the discourse to Ulysses, to give the spy an opportunity of mentioning his design on Philoctetes. He blends truth and falsehood, we see, together as artfully as possible, which prevents the least suspicion of fraud or treachery.

S P Y.

A fleet already fails to fetch thee back,
 Conducted by old Phœnix, and the sons
 Of valiant Theseus.

N E O P T O L E M U S .

Come they then to force me?
 Or am I to be won by their persuasion?

S P Y.

I know not that; you have what I cou'd learn.

N E O P T O L E M U S .

And did th' Atridæ fend them?

S P Y.

Sent they are,

And will be with you soon.

N E O P T O L E M U S .

But wherefore then

Came not Ulysses? did his courage fail?

S P Y.

He, e'er I left the camp, with Diomede
 On some important embassy fail'd forth
 In search——

N E O P T O L E M U S .

Of whom?

S P Y.

S P Y.

There was a man——but stay,
Who is thy friend here, tell me, but speak softly.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [whispering him.
The famous Philoctetes.

S P Y.

Ha! begone then,
Ask me no more; away, immediately.

PHILOCTETES.

What do these dark mysterious whispers mean?
Concern they me, my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not what
He means to say, but I wou'd have him speak
Boldly before us all, whate'er it be.

S P Y.

Do not betray me to the Grecian host,
Nor make me speak what I wou'd fain conceal;
I am but poor; they have befriended me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In me thou seest an enemy confest
To the Atridæ; this is my best friend
Because he hates them too; if thou art mine,
Hide nothing then.

SPY.

S P Y.

Confider firft.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I have.

S P Y.

The blame will be on you.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Why, let it be;

But fpeak, I charge thee.

S P Y.

Since I muft then, know,

In folemn league combin'd, the bold Ulyffes,

And gallant Diomedé have fworn, by force

Or by perfuafion to bring back thy friend :

The Grecians heard Laertes' fon declare

His purpofe, far more refolute he feem'd

Than Diomede, and furer of fuccefs.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But why th' Atridæ, after fo long time,

Again fhould wifh to fee this wretched exile,

Whence this defire? came it from th' angry gods

To punifh thus their inhumanity?

S P Y.

I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece

Of late you have not heard: there was a prophet,
 Son of old Priam, Helenus by name,
 Him in his midnight walks, the wily chief
 Ulysses, curse of ev'ry tongue, espy'd;
 Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks
 A welcome spoil; much he foretold to all,
 And added last, that Troy shou'd never fall
 Till Philoctetes from this isle return'd;
 Ulysses heard, and instant promise gave
 To fetch him hence; he hop'd by gentle means
 To gain him; those successless, force at last
 Cou'd but compel him; he wou'd go, he cry'd,
 And if he fail'd, his head shou'd pay the forfeit.
 I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone,
 Thou and thy friend, if thou wou'dst wish to save him.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And does the traitor think he can persuade me?
 As well might he persuade me to return
 From death to life, as his base father did.

SPY.

His father. Sisyphus; imagined by many to be the father of Ulysses: concerning whom, a superstitious report prevail'd, that having on his death-bed desired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complain'd to Pluto of her cruelty, in not performing the funeral obsequies, and was by him permitted, on promise of immediate return, to revisit this world, in order to punish her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compell'd by Mercury. It is necessary to the understanding of Sophocles, that the English reader shou'd be familiar with, and reconciled to all these absurdities contain'd in the mythology and religion of the Greeks.

S P Y.

Of that I know not: I must to my ship;
Farewell, and may the gods protect you both.

[Exit.

PHILOCTETES.

Lead me, expose me to the Grecian host!
And cou'd the insolent Ulysses hope
With his soft flatt'ries e'er to conquer me?
No; sooner wou'd I listen to the voice
Of that fell serpent, whose envenom'd tongue
Hath lam'd me thus; but what is there he dare not
Or say or do? I know he will be here
Ev'n now, depend on't; therefore, let's away;
Quick let the sea divide us from Ulysses;
Let us be gone; for well-tim'd expedition,
The task perform'd, brings safety and repose.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Soon as the wind permits us, we embark,
But now 'tis adverse.

PHILOCTETES.

Ev'ry wind is fair,
When we are flying from misfortune.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

True;
And 'tis against them too.

PHILOCT-

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! no storms

Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I'm ready; take what may be necessary,

And follow me.

PHILOCTETES.

I want not much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Perhaps

My ship will furnish you.

PHILOCTETES.

There is a plant

Which to my wound gives some relief; I must

Have that.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is there aught else?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my bow,

I had forgot; I must not lose that treasure.

[Philoctetes steps towards his grotto, and brings out his bow

NEOPTOLEMUS. and arrows.]

Are these the famous arrows then?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

They are.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And may I be permitted to behold,
To touch, to pay my adoration to them?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

In these, my son, in ev'ry thing that's mine
Thou hast a right.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But if it be a crime,

I wou'd not; otherwise——

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! thou art full

Of piety; in thee it is no crime;
In thee, my friend, by whom alone I look
Once more with pleasure on the radiant sun;
By whom I live; who giv'st me to return
To my dear father, to my friends, my country.
Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more
I rise to triumph o'er them by thy aid;
Behold them, touch them, but return them to me,
And boast that virtue which on thee alone
Bestow'd such honour; virtue made them mine;
I can deny thee nothing: he, whose heart

Is grateful, can alone deserve the name
Of friend, to ev'ry treasure far superior:

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Go in.

PHILOCTETES.

Come with me; for my painful wound
Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward. [Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Since proud Ixion, doom'd to feel
The tortures of th' eternal wheel,

Bound by the hand of angry Jove,
Receiv'd the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was distress so deep or woe so great
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who ever with the just and good
Guileless of fraud and rapine stood,
And the fair paths of virtue still pursu'd;

I i 2

Alone,

Since proud Ixion, &c. The story of Ixion, here alluded to, is generally known; to the few, who are unacquainted with it, it may be sufficient to observe, that Ixion was in love with Juno; and for boasting of that success in his amour, which he never met with, was thrown by Jupiter into hell, where, being placed on a wheel encompass'd with serpents, he was turn'd round without ceasing.

This song of the chorus, agreeably to the precepts of Horace, arises immediately from the subject, being a pathetic lamentation over Philoctetes; whose distresses are painted in the warmest colours, and described in all the elegance of antient simplicity.

Alone on this inhospitable shore,
 Where waves for ever beat, and tempests roar;
 How cou'd he e'er or hope or comfort know,
 Or painful life support beneath such weight of woe!

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Expos'd to the inclement skies,
 Deserted and forlorn he lyes,
 No friend or fellow-mourner there,
 To sooth his sorrows, and divide his care;
 Or seek the healing plant of pow'r to 'swage
 His aching wound, and mitigate it's rage;
 But if perchance, a-while releas'd
 From tort'ring pain, he sinks to rest,
 Awaken'd soon, and by sharp hunger prest,
 Compell'd to wander forth in search of food,
 He crawls in anguish to the neighb'ring wood;
 Ev'n as the tott'ring infant in despair,
 Who mourns an absent mother's kind supporting care.

S T R O P H E II.

The teeming earth, who mortals still supplies
 With ev'ry good, to him her feed denies;
 A stranger to the joy that flows
 From the kind aid which man on man bestows;
 Nor food alas! to him was giv'n,
 Save when his arrows pierc'd the birds of heav'n;

Nor

Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl,
 For ten long years relieve his cheerless foul;
 But glad was he his eager thirst to slake
 In the unwholsome pool, or ever-stagnant lake.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed;
 A fairer fate, and brighter days succeed:
 For he at last hath found a friend
 Of noblest race, to save and to defend,
 To guide him with protecting hand,
 And safe restore him to his native land;
 On Sperchius' flow'ry banks to join the throng
 Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral song
 On OËta's top, which saw Alcides rise,
 And from the flaming pile ascend his native skies.

[Exeunt.

Hath found a friend &c. Brumoy observes on this passage, that the chorus, being strongly attach'd to the interest of their master Neoptolemus, are but the echos of his expressions, and though they could not therefore be ignorant of his design to carry Philoctetes to Troy instead of his native country, they here mention the latter as his real intention, which they must be supposed to do from the fear of being over-heard by Philoctetes, whose cave was close to them.

On Sperchius' banks. Sperchius was a river in Thessaly.

Melian nymphs. Melos was an island near Candy, reckon'd among the Cyclades, and now call'd Milo.

End of A C T II.

A C T III.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

COME, Philoctetes; why thus silent? wherefore
This sudden terror on thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Whence is it?

PHILOCTETES.

Nothing; my son, go on.

NEOP-

Nothing, my son. The pains, which Philoctetes felt from his wound, are described as periodical, returning at certain seasons, and attended with violent agonies and convulsions, which generally terminated in a profuse discharge of matter; the pain then ceasing, the fatigue occasion'd by it brought on a gentle slumber which relieved him. Philoctetes, feeling the symptoms of his distemper approaching, endeavours as much as possible to conceal his anguish, being apprehensive that his cries and groans might induce Neoptolemus, in spite of his promise, to leave him behind; he makes slight of it therefore, till quite over-power'd by continual torture, he acknowledges himself at last unable to stir. This circumstance, we may observe, is artfully thrown in by the poet, to stop the effect of Ulysses's stratagem, which was just on the point of execution, and which, if it succeeded, must of course have put an end to the drama; this accident intervening gives a new turn to the whole, serves to introduce the remorse and repentance of Neoptolemus, gives Ulysses an opportunity of appearing, and brings about the catastrophe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it thy wound

That pains thee thus?

PHILOCTETES.

No; I am better now.

Oh! gods!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why dost thou call thus on the gods?

PHILOCTETES.

To smile propitious, and preserve us—Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art in mis'ry. Tell me; wilt thou not?

What is it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son, I can no longer

Conceal it from thee. O! I dye, I perish!

By the great gods let me implore thee, now

This moment, if thou hast a sword, O! strike,

Cut off this painful limb, and end my being.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What can this mean, that unexpected thus

It shou'd torment thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not, my son?

NEOP-

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What is the cause?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Can you not guess it?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

No.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Nor I.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

That's stranger still.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

My son, my son!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

This new attack is terrible indeed!

P H I L O C T E T E S.

'Tis inexpressible! have pity on me!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What shall I do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Do not be terrify'd,

And leave me: it's returns are regular,

And like the traveller, when it's appetite

Is satisfy'd, it will depart. Oh! oh!

N E O P-

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art oppress'd with ills on ev'ry side.
Give me thy hand; come, wilt thou lean upon me?

PHILOCTETES.

No; but these arrows, take, preserve 'em for me
A little while, till I grow better: sleep
Is coming on me, and my pains will cease.
Let me be quiet; if mean time, our foes
Surprize thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious trust
I have repos'd in thee; that were ruin
To thee, and to thy friend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be not afraid,
No hands but mine shall touch them; give them to me.

PHILOCTETES.

Receive them, son; and let it be thy pray'r
They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides. [Gives him the bow and arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

May the gods
Forbid it ever; may they guide our course
And speed our prosp'rous fails!

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Alas! my son,

I fear thy vows are vain; behold my blood
 Flows from the wound; O! how it pains me! now,
 It comes, it hastens; do not, do not leave me;
 O! that Ulysses felt this racking torture,
 Ev'n to his inmost soul! again it comes.
 O! Agamemnon, Menelaus, why
 Shou'd not you bear these pangs as I have done?
 O! death, where art thou, death? so often call'd,
 Wilt thou not listen? wilt thou never come?
 Take thou the Lemnian fire, my gen'rous friend,
 Do me the same kind office which I did
 For my Alcides; these are thy reward;
 He gave them to me, thou alone deserv'st
 The great inheritance. What says my friend?
 What says my dear preserver? O! where art thou?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I mourn thy hapless fate.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Be of good cheer,

Quick

The Lemnian fire. Alluding, most probably, to the generally-received opinion, that the forges of Vulcan were in the island of Lemnos.

The same kind office. Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his last moments, and set fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of mount OËta.

Quick my disorder comes, and goes as foon;
I only beg thee not to leave me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't, I will stay.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou indeed?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Trust me, I will.

PHILOCTETES.

I need not bind thee to it

By oath.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! no; 'twere impious to forsake thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I do.

PHILOCTETES.

Thither, O! thither lead me. [pointing up to heaven.]

K k 2

NEOP-

Give me thy hand. Amongst the Greeks, in all compacts and agreements, it was usual to take each other by the right hand, that being the manner of plighting faith; this was always consider'd by men of character as equally binding with the most solemn oath; Philoctetes therefore desires no other assurance of the sincerity of his friend. It is perhaps needless here to remark, that this custom has been adopted by the moderns, and is practis'd in almost every nation to this day, though it does not amongst us carry so much weight with it, being seldom made use of in matters of great importance,

P H I L O C T E T E S.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What sayst thou? where?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Up yonder,

Above.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What, lost again? why look'st thou thus
On that bright circle?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Let me, let me go.

N E O P T O L E M U S. [lays hold of him.

Where wouldest thou go?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Loose me.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I will not.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Oh!

You'll kill me, if you do not.

N E O P T O L E M U S. [lets him go.

There, then; now

Is thy mind better?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! receive me earth;

Receive

Receive a dying man; here must I lye;
For O! my pain's so great I cannot rise.

[Philoctetes sinks down on the earth near the entrance of the cave.]

S C E N E II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Sleep hath o'erta'en him, see his head is lain
On the cold earth; the balmy sweat thick drops
From ev'ry limb, and from the broken vein
Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his slumbers.

CHORUS.

(INVOCATION TO SLEEP.)

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,
Great phyfician of the mind,
Who doft nor pain nor sorrow know,
Sweetest balm of ev'ry woe,
Mildest fov'reign, hear us now;
Hear thy wretched fuppliant's vow;
His eyes in gentle flumbers clofe,
And continue his repofe;

Hear

Sleep, thou patron, &c. Philoctetes, quite faint from excefs of pain, lays himfelf down on the earth, and finks into a fhort flumber; the chorus, with great propriety, fill up the paufe of action by an invocation to fleep. In the original, this fpeech of the chorus, and the next, are in ftrophe, antiftrophe, and epode; the reafon why I have thrown only the firft part into rhyme muft be obvious to the judicious reader,

Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow,
Great phyfician, hear us now.

And now, my fon, what beft may fuit thy purpofe
Confider well, and how we are to act;
What more can we expect? the time is come;
For better far is opportunity
Seiz'd at the lucky hour, than all the counfels
Which wifdom dictates, or which craft infpires.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

He hears us not; but eafy as it is
To gain the prize, it wou'd avail us nothing
Were he not with us; Phœbus hath reserv'd
For him alone the crown of victory;
But thus to boaft of what we cou'd not do,
And break our word, were moft difgraceful to us.

C H O R U S.

The god will guide us, fear it not, my fon;
But what thou fay'ft, fpeak foft, for well thou know'ft
The fick man's fleep is fhort; he may awake
And hear us, therefore let us hide our purpofe;
If then thou think'ft as he does, thou know'ft whom,

This

Thou know'ft whom. The chorus means Ulyffes, but is afraid to mention his name, left Philoctetes fhould awake and hear it, which would at once difcover the whole plot againft him.

This is the time; at such a time, my son,
The wisest err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes sleeps, void of all help.

Lame, impotent, unable to resist,
He is as one among the dead; ev'n now
We'll take him with us; 'twere an easy task.
Leave it to me, my son; there is no danger.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No more; his eyes are open; see, he moves.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS,

PHILOCTETES. [Awaking

O! fair returning light! beyond my hope;
You too my kind preservers! O! my son,
I cou'd not think thou wou'dst have stay'd so long
In kind compassion to thy friend; alas!
Th' Atridæ never wou'd have acted thus;
But noble is thy nature, and thy birth,
And therefore little did my wretchedness,

Nor

O! fair, &c. Mr. Brumoy here begins his fourth act, which is certainly very absurd, as there is not the least pause of action, or vacancy of scene, Philoctetes awaking immediately after the last speech of the chorus, who observed his eyes opening; besides that the 3d act is thus render'd most preposterously short; though the French critic remarks, that it is, notwithstanding, a compleat act; "suivant l' idea des Grecs," "according to the idea of the Greeks." We will venture however to pronounce, that if the Greeks had divided their tragedies into acts, they would have done it with more judgment.

Nor from my wounds the noisome stench deter
 Thy gen'rous heart. I have a little respite;
 Help me, my son; I'll try to rise; this weakness
 Will leave me soon, and then we'll go together.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I little thought to find thee thus restor'd.
 Trust me, I joy to see thee free from pain,
 And hear thee speak; the marks of death were on thee;
 Raise thyself up; thy friends here, if thou wilt,
 Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burthen to them
 If we request it.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

No; thy hand alone;

I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough
 If they can bear with me and my distemper,
 When we embark.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Well, be it so, but rise.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [Philoctetes rises.

O never fear; I'll rise as well as ever. [Exeunt.

I'll rise as well as ever. The end of the 3d act (if an act there must be) may, I think, with greater propriety be placed here; as Philoctetes may be supposed to creep into his cave to look for the plant which he mention'd, and Neoptolemus to go in with him, so that the stage would be left void. This act, even thus extended, is not half so long as the preceding; the division, however, is better than Brumoy's.

End of A C T III.

A C T IV.

PHILOCTETES.

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A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

HOW shall I act?

PHILOCTETES.

What says my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

I know not what to say; my doubtful mind——

PHILOCTETES.

Talk'd you of doubts? you did not surely.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ay,

That's my misfortune.

L I

PHILOC-

How shall I act? Neoptolemus, who, as I before observed, is described to us as of an honest and ingenuous disposition, being deeply affected by the distress and anguish of Philoctetes, soften'd at the same time by the confidence which this unhappy man had reposed in him, and reflecting on the solemn contract he had just made, is struck with horror and remorse at the thought of such treachery and baseness; he advances in a pensive posture, and speaks to himself without regarding Philoctetes, who is at a loss to comprehend him, till at last he opens his heart and confesses the design; this gives a new and sudden turn to the plot, and prepares the necessary appearance of Ulysses. Thus does every circumstance in this excellent tragedy arise naturally from that which goes before it, and all the various parts of the edifice contribute to the strength, symmetry and beauty of the whole.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Is then my distrefs

The caufe at laft you will not take me with you?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

All is distrefs and mis'ry, when we act
 Againft our nature, and consent to ill.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

But fure to help a good man in misfortunes
 Is not againft thy nature.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Men will call me

A villain; that diftracts me.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Not for this;

For what thou mean'ft to do, thou may'ft deserve it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What fhall I do? direct me, Jove! To hide
 What I fhould speak, and tell a bafe untruth;
 'Tis double guilt.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

He purpofes at laft,

I fear it much, to leave me.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Leave thee? No.

But

But how to make thee go with pleasure hence,
There I'm distress'd.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I understand thee not;
What means my son?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I can no longer hide
The dreadful secret from thee; thou art going
To Troy, ev'n to the Greeks, to the Atridæ.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Alas! what say'st thou?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Do not weep, but hear me.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

What must I hear? what will you do with me?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

First, set thee free; then carry thee, my friend,
To conquer Troy.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Is this indeed thy purpose?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

This am I bound to do.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Then I am lost,

Undone, betray'd; canst thou, my friend, do this?

Give me my arms again.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

It cannot be.

I must obey the pow'rs who sent me hither ;
Justice enjoins ; the common cause demands it.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Thou worst of men, thou vile artificer
Of fraud most infamous, what hast thou done ?
How have I been deceiv'd ? dost thou not blush
To look upon me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring ? base betrayer !
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,
The only means ; give 'em, restore 'em to me ;
Do not take all : alas ! he hears me not,
Nor deigns to speak, but casts an angry look
That says, I never shall be free again.
O ! mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds !

To

Thou worst of men. The original is $\omega \pi \upsilon \rho \sigma \upsilon$, which, according to the scholiast, was meant for a pun on the word $\Pi \upsilon \rho \rho \omicron \varsigma$, Pyrrhus, the first and proper name of Neoptolemus. Brumoy translates it, O ! rage digne de ton nom'. I thought so poor a quibble might as well be omitted.

He hears me not. Neoptolemus repenting of his perfidy and lost in thought, is debating within himself, whether he shall restore the arrows to Philoctetes ; he walks about therefore in great agitation of mind, and gives no attention to what is said to him ; this whole scene is full of action, and the variety of passions, express'd in the countenance and gesture of both, must have had a fine effect in the representation.

To you I speak, to you alone I now
Must breathe my sorrows; you are wont to hear
My sad complaints, and I will tell you all
That I have suffer'd from Achilles' son;
Who, bound by solemn oath to bear me hence
To my dear native soil, now fails for Troy.
The perjur'd wretch first gave his plighted hand,
Then stole the sacred arrows of my friend,
The son of Jove, the great Alcides; those
He means to shew the Greeks, to snatch me hence,
And boast his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
This empty shade, were worthy of his arm;
Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus
Subdu'd me, and ev'n now to fraud alone
He owes the conquest; I have been betray'd.
Give me my arms again, and be thyself
Once more; O! speak; thou wilt not; then I'm lost.
O! my poor hut! again I come to thee,
Naked and destitute of food, once more
Receive me, here to dye; for now, no longer
Shall my swift arrow reach the flying prey,
Or on the mountains pierce the wand'ring herd;
I shall myself afford a banquet now
To those I us'd to feed on; they the hunters,

And

And I their easy prey; so shall the blood
 Which I so oft have shed be paid by mine;
 And all this too from him whom once I deem'd
 Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill;
 And yet I will not curse thee, till I know
 Whether thou still retain'st thy horrid purpose,
 Or dost repent thee of it; if thou dost not,
 Destruction wait thee.

C H O R U S.

We attend your pleasure,
 My royal lord, we must be gone; determine
 To leave, or take him with us.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

His distress
 Doth move me much; trust me, I long have felt
 Compassion for him.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! then by the gods
 Pity me now, my son, nor let mankind
 Reproach thee for a fraud so base.

N E O P-

We attend your pleasure. Brumoy sends off the chorus towards the sea-shore immediately after the words "when we embark," p. 256, and brings them back again in this place, as sent by Ulysses to know the reason of Neoptolemus's delay. This departure and return of the chorus, which is a mere conjecture of Brumoy's, is, I think, unnecessary; besides that it is not agreeable to the conduct generally observed by Sophocles, whose chorus's always continue on the stage, unless on some very important occasion.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

What shall I do? wou'd I were still at Scyros,
For I am most unhappy.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son,

Thou art not base by nature, but misguided
By those who are, to deeds unworthy of thee;
Turn then thy fraud on them who best deserve it;
Restore my arms, and leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Speak, my friends,

What's to be done?

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Ha! dost thou hesitate?

Traitor! be gone. Give me the arms.

PHILOCT.

Speak, my friends. Neoptolemus, already resolved to atone for his crime, by restoring the arrows, applies to the chorus for their opinion, which he knew would be in favour of Philoctetes. Ulysses surpris'd at their unexpected delay, and impatient to be gone, leaves his ship, and, having overheard Neoptolemus, enters at this important juncture. His sudden intrusion and haughty behaviour but serve to confirm Neoptolemus in his resolution. Nothing can be better imagined or conducted than the plan of this excellent drama.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Ah me!

Ulysses here?

U L Y S S E S.

Ay! 'tis Ulysses' self

That stands before thee,

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Then I'm lost, betray'd;

This was the cruel spoiler.

U L Y S S E S.

Doubt it not.

'Twas I; I do confess it.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [To Neoptolemus.

O! my son,

Give me them back.

U L Y S S E S.

It must not be; with them

Thyself must go; or we shall drag thee hence.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And will they force me? O! thou daring villain!

U L Y S S E S.

They will, unless thou dost consent to go.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Wilt thou, O! Lemnos! wilt thou, mighty Vulcan!

With

With thy all-conqu'ring fire, permit me thus
To be torn from thee?

U L Y S S E S.

Know, great Jove him self
Doth here preside; he hath decreed thy fate,
I but perform his will.

PHILOCTETES.

Detested wretch,
Mak'st thou the gods a cover for thy crime?
Do they teach falsehood?

U L Y S S E S.

No, they taught me truth,
And therefore, hence; that way thy journey lyes. [Pointing

PHILOCTETES. to the sea.]

It doth not.

U L Y S S E S.

But, I say, it must be so.

PHILOCTETES.

And Philoctetes then was born a slave!
I did not know it.

U L Y S S E S.

No; I mean to place thee
Ev'n with the noblest, ev'n with those by whom
Proud Troy must perish.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Never will I go,

Befall what may, whilst this deep cave is open
To bury all my sorrows.

U L Y S S E S.

What wou'dst do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Here throw me down, dash out my desp'rate brains
Against this rock, and sprinkle it with my blood.

U L Y S S E S. [To the Chorus.

Seize, and prevent him.

[They seize him.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Manacled! O! hands,

How helpless are you now! those arms, which once
Protected, thus torn from you! thou abandon'd, [To Ulysses.
Thou shameless wretch! from whom nor truth nor justice,
Nought that becomes the gen'rous mind can flow,
How hast thou us'd me! how betray'd! suborn'd
This stranger, this poor youth, who worthier far
To be my friend than thine, was only here
Thy instrument; he knew not what he did,
And now, thou see'st, repents him of the crime,
Which brought such guilt on him, such woes on me.

But

But thy foul foul, which from its dark recess
 Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art,
 Unwilling as he was, instructed him,
 And made him soon a master in deceit.
 I am thy pris'ner now; ev'n now thou mean'st
 To drag me hence, from this unhappy shore
 Where first thy malice left me, a poor exile,
 Deserted, friendless, and tho' living, dead
 To all mankind; perish the vile betrayer!
 O! I have curs'd thee often, but the gods
 Will never hear the pray'rs of Philoctetes.
 Life and its joys are thine; whilst I unhappy,
 Am but the scorn of thee, and the Atridæ,
 Thy haughty masters; fraud and force compell'd thee,
 Or thou had'st never fail'd with them to Troy.
 I lent my willing aid; with sev'n brave ships
 I plough'd the main to serve 'em; in return
 They cast me forth, disgrac'd me, left me here;
 Thou say'st they did it; they impute the crime

M m 2

To

From its dark recess, &c. The Greek is *δια μυχων ελετας*, 'per latebras
 'prospiciens;' the expression is remarkable, and the translation therefore almost
 literal.

Fraud and force compell'd thee. Ulysses, unwilling to go among the other
 chiefs to the siege of Troy, feign'd himself mad; but being detected by Pala-
 medes was after all obliged to join them.

To thee; and what will you do with me now?
 And whither must I go? what end, what purpose,
 Cou'd urge thee to it? I am nothing, lost
 And dead already; wherefore, tell me, wherefore?
 Am I not still the same detested burthen,
 Loathsome and lame? Again must Philoctetes
 Disturb your holy rites? If I am with you,
 How can you make libations? That was once
 Your vile pretence for inhumanity.

O! may you perish for the deed! The gods
 Will grant it sure, if justice be their care,
 And that it is, I know. You had not left
 Your native soil to seek a wretch like me,
 Had not some impulse from the powr's above
 Spite of yourselves, ordain'd it; O! my country,
 And you, O! gods, who look upon this deed,
 Punish, in pity to me, punish all
 The guilty band! could I behold them perish,
 My wounds were nothing; that wou'd heal them all.

C H O R U S.

[to Ulysses.

Observe, my lord, what bitterness of soul

His

Am I not still. This is mention'd in the first scene as the reason assign'd for exposing Philoctetes on the island; the sarcasm therefore is just and natural.

His words express; he bends not to misfortune,
But seems to brave it.

U L Y S S E S.

I cou'd answer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more
Than this—I act as best befits our purpose.
Where virtue, truth, and justice are requir'd,
Ulysses yields to none: I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet submit to thee:
Let him remain. Thy arrows shall suffice;
We want thee not; Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myself, with equal strength
Can aim the deadly shaft, with equal skill.
What cou'd thy presence do? let Lemnos keep thee.
Farewel! perhaps the honours, once design'd
For thee, may be reserv'd to grace Ulysses.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! shall Greece then see my deadliest foe
Adorn'd with arms which I alone shou'd bear?

U L Y S S E S.

No more: I must be gone.

PHILOCT-

Teucer can draw the bow. Teucer was accounted one of the best archers in the Grecian army, though Menelaus, we may remember, reproaches him for it. See note in Ajax, p. 70.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [to Neoptolemus.

Son of Achilles,

Thou wilt not leave me too? I must not lose
Thy converse, thy assistance.

U L Y S S E S. [to Neoptolemus.

Look not on him;

Away, I charge thee; 'twou'd be fatal to us.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [to the chorus.

Will you forsake me, friends? dwells no compassion
Within your breasts for me?

C H O R U S. [pointing to Neopt.

He is our master,

We speak and act but as his will directs.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know he will upbraid me for this weakness,
But 'tis my nature, and I must consent,
Since Philoctetes asks it; stay you with him,
Till to the gods our pious pray'rs we offer,
And all things are prepar'd for our departure;
Perhaps, mean time, to better thoughts his mind
May turn relenting; we must go: remember
When we shall call you, follow instantly.

[Exit with Ulysses,

S C E N E

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my poor hut! and is it then decreed
 Again I come to thee to part no more?
 To end my wretched days in this sad cave,
 The scene of all my woes; for whither now
 Can I betake me? who will feed, support,
 Or cherish Philoctetes? not a hope
 Remains for me. O! that th' impetuous storms
 Wou'd bear me with them to some distant clime!
 For I must perish here.

CHORUS.

Unhappy man!

Thou hast provok'd thy fate; thyself alone
 Art to thyself a foe, to scorn the good,
 Which wisdom bids thee take, and chuse misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

Wretch that I am, to perish here alone.

O!

O! my poor hut &c. From this place, to the words 'O! ye have brought
 'back once more &c.' the Greek is all *strophe* and *Antistrophe*, set to music,
 and sung alternately by Philoctetes and the chorus.

Th' impetuous storms, &c. The Greek is *πτοκλεις* or *πτοχαεις*, which
 the scholiasts interpret, harpies. Ratallerus and Brumoy, whom I have here
 follow'd, render it, storms, which is the most natural and obvious sense.

O! I shall see the face of man no more,
 Nor shall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
 And bring me sustenance! such vile delusions
 Us'd to betray me! O! that pains, like those
 I feel, might reach the author of my woes!

C H O R U S.

The gods decreed it; we are not to blame;
 Heap not thy curses therefore on the guiltless,
 But take our friendship.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

[pointing to the sea-shore.

I behold him there;
 Ev'n now I see him laughing me to scorn
 On yonder shore, and in his hand the darts
 He waves triumphant, which no arms but these
 Had ever borne. O! my dear glorious treasure!
 Hadst thou a mind to feel th' indignity,
 How woud'st thou grieve to change thy noble master,
 The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch
 So vile, so base, so impious as Ulysses!

C H O R U S.

Justice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
 Nor from his lips, reproach and bitterness

Invidious

The author of my woes. Ulysses.

Invidious flow ; Ulyffes, by the voice
Of Greece appointed, only fought a friend
To join the common caufe, and ferve his country.

PHILOCTETES.

Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air,
And you, who on thefe mountains love to feed,
My favage prey, whom once I cou'd purfue ;
Fearful no more of Philo ctetes, fly
This hollow rock, I cannot hurt you now ;
You need not dread to enter here ; alas !
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On thefe poor limbs, when I fhall be no more.
Where can I hope for food ? or who can breathe
This vital air, when life-preferving earth
No longer will affift him ?

CHORUS.

By the gods
Let me intreat thee, if thou doft regard
Our mafter, and thy friend, come to him now,
Whilst thou mayft 'fcape this fad calamity ;
Who but thyfelf wou'd chufe to be unhappy
That cou'd prevent it ?

PHILOCTETES.

O ! you have brought back

N n

Once

Life-preferving earth. The Greek is remarkably foft and elegant, *Βίος ωπος αἰχ'*

Once more the sad remembrance of my griefs;
Why, why my friends, wou'd you afflict me thus?

C H O R U S.

Afflict thee, how?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Think you I'll e'er return
To hateful Troy?

C H O R U S.

We wou'd advise thee to it.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.

C H O R U S.

That we shall

Most gladly; to the ships, my friends, away. [Going.
Obey your orders.

P H I L O C T E T E S. [Stops them.

By protecting Jove,

Who hears the suppliant's pray'r, do not forsake me.

C H O R U S. [Returning.

Be calm then.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! my friends! will you then stay?

Do, by the gods I beg you.

C H O R U S.

CHORUS.

Why that groan?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! I dye! my wound, my wound! hereafter
What can I do? you will not leave me; hear—

CHORUS.

What can'st thou say we do not know already?

PHILOCTETES.

O'erwhelm'd by such a storm of griefs as I am,
You shou'd not thus resent a madman's phrenzy.

CHORUS.

Comply then and be happy.

PHILOCTETES.

Never, never;

Be sure of that; tho' thunder-bearing Jove
Shou'd with his light'nings blast me, wou'd I go;
No; let Troy perish, perish all the host
Who sent me here to dye; but O! my friends,
Grant me this last request.

CHORUS.

What is it? speak.

PHILOCTETES.

A sword, a dart, some instrument of death.

N n 2

CHORUS.

My wound. The original is O! my foot, my foot, which the reader may substitute if he thinks proper.

C H O R U S.

What wou'dst thou do?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'd hack off ev'ry limb.

Death, my foul longs for death.

C H O R U S.

But wherefore is

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll seek my father.

C H O R U S.

Whither?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

In the tomb;

There he must be. O! Scyros, O! my country,

How cou'd I bear to see thee as I am!

I who had left thy sacred shores to aid

The hateful sons of Greece! O! misery! [Goes into the cave.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

E'ER now we shou'd have ta'en thee to our ships,
 But that advancing this way I behold
 Ulysses, and with him Achilles' son.

U L Y S S E S.

Why this return? wherefore this haste?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I come

To purge me of my crimes.

U L Y S S E S.

Indeed! what crimes?

N E O P-

E'er now we shou'd &c. The same impropriety, which struck us on the opening of the fourth act, recurs with equal force at the beginning of this. The scene is not void, and consequently no such division can take place. That of Brumoy is still more absurd, which takes in this speech to the fourth act, as if it were possible that the chorus should perceive their masters Ulysses and Neoptolemus approaching, and immediately run off the stage; it is surely much better to make them go in with Philoctetes, and come out again speaking to him still remaining in the cave.

Why this return &c. Neoptolemus advances in haste towards the cave of Philoctetes; Ulysses apprehensive of his design, follows and expostulates with him.

N E O P T O L E M U S .

My blind obedience to the Grecian host,
And to thy counsels.

U L Y S S E S .

Hast thou practic'd aught
Base, or unworthy of thee?

N E O P T O L E M U S .

Yes, by art
And vile deceit betray'd th' unhappy.

U L Y S S E S .

Whom?

Alas! what mean you?

N E O P T O L E M U S .

Nothing. But the son
Of Pæan——

U L Y S S E S .

Ha! what woud'st thou do? my heart
Mifgives me. [afide.]

N E O P T O L E M U S .

I have ta'en his arms, and now——

U L Y S S E S .

Thou woud'st restore them! speak, is that thy purpose?

Almighty

Thou woud'st restore them. The resolution of Neoptolemus to restore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, disconcerts the measures of Ulysses, and awakens the attention of the spectator, who expects with eagerness the consequences of it.

Almighty Jove!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unjustly shou'd I keep

Another's right?

ULYSSES.

Now, by the gods, thou mean'st

To mock me; dost thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If to speak truth

Be mockery.

ULYSSES.

And does Achilles' son

Say this to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why force me to repeat

My words so often to thee?

ULYSSES.

Once to hear them

Is once indeed too much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubt then no more,

For I have told thee all.

ULYSSES.

There are, remember,

There

There are, who may prevent thee.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Who shall dare

To thwart my purpose?

U L Y S S E S.

All the Grecian host,

And with them, I.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Wise as thou art, Ulysses,

Thou talk'st most idly.

U L Y S S E S.

Wisdom is not thine

Either in word or deed.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Know, to be just

Is better far than to be wise.

U L Y S S E S.

But where,

Where is the justice thus unauthoris'd

To give a treasure back thou ow'st to me,

And to my counsels?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I have done a wrong,

And I will try to make atonement for it.

U L Y S S E S.

PHILOCTETES. 281

U L Y S S E S.

Dost thou not fear the pow'r of Greece?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I fear

Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.

U L Y S S E S.

'Tis not with Troy then we contend, but thee.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know not that.

U L Y S S E S.

See'st thou this hand? behold

It grasps my sword.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Mine is alike prepar'd

Nor seeks delay.

U L Y S S E S.

But I will let thee go ;

Greece shall know all thy guilt, and shall revenge it.

[Exit Ulysses.]

O O

SCENE

I will let thee go. Brumoy, whose notions of honour are perhaps a little too modern on the occasion, is shock'd at this appearance of cowardice in Ulysses, who after thus exasperating Neoptolemus, instead of resenting his cavalier treatment, very prudently retires, with a threat to tell the Grecians of his ill behaviour. The conduct of Sophocles in this particular is, notwithstanding, unexceptionable ; for, however unavoidable a duel might have been on the French stage in such a circumstance, the antients did not see the necessity

PHILOCTETES.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Twas well determin'd; always be as wise
As now thou art, and thou may'st live in safety.

[approaching toward the cave.

Ho! son of Pæan! Philoctetes, leave
Thy rocky habitation, and come forth.

PHILOCTETES. [from the cave.

What noise was that? who calls on Philoctetes?

[he comes out.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what wou'd you, strangers? are you come
To heap fresh mis'ries on me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be of comfort,

And hear the tidings which I bring.

PHILOCTETES.

I dare not;

Thy

cessity of it; their heroes, as we find in Homer, bore a great deal of bad language from each other without drawing their swords. It would therefore have been highly inconsistent with the character of the prudent Ulysses to have quarrel'd and fought with his friend, and thus put an end at once to the whole scheme of his expedition.

Thy flatt'ring tongue already hath betray'd me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And is there then no room for penitence?

PHILOCTETES.

Such were thy words, when, seeminglly sincere,

Yet meaning ill, thou stol'st my arms away.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But now it is not so. I only came

To know if thou art resolute to stay,

Or fail with us.

PHILOCTETES.

No more of that; 'tis vain

And useles all.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Art thou then fix'd?

PHILOCTETES.

I am;

It is impossible to say how firmly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I thought I cou'd have mov'd thee, but I've done.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well thou hast; thy labour had been vain;

For never cou'd my soul esteem the man

Who rob'd me of my dearest, best possession,

284 P H I L O C T E T E S.

And now wou'd have me listen to his counsels;
Unworthy offspring of the best of men!
Perish th' Atridæ! perish first Ulysses!
Perish thyself!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Withhold thy imprecations,
And take thy arrows back.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

A second time
Woud'st thou deceive me?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By th' almighty pow'r
Of sacred Jove I swear.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! joyful sound!
If thou say'st truly.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Let my actions speak.
Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again.

[gives him the arrows.]

S C E N E IV.

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

U L Y S S E S.

Witness ye gods, here in the name of Greece

And

And the Atridæ, I forbid it.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha!

What voice is that? Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

Ay, 'tis I,

I who perforce will carry thee to Troy
Spite of Achilles' son.

PHILOCTETES.

[raising his arm as intending to throw an arrow at Ulysses:

Not if I aim

This shaft aright.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by the gods I beg thee

Stop thy rash hand.

[laying hold of him:

PHILOCT.

Not if I aim, &c. Ulysses, strongly opposing and protesting against the restitution of the arrows, Philoctetes no sooner regains them than, warm with resentment, he aims an arrow at his breast, but is withheld by Neoptolemus. Mr. de Fenelon, in his *Telemaque*, has varied a little from Sophocles in this particular. He supposes Ulysses to have made a sign to Neoptolemus to restore the arrows; and that Philoctetes notwithstanding, in the heat of passion, drew the bow against his enemy, but was stop'd by Neoptolemus. 'I was ashamed of myself, says Philoctetes (see *Tel. b. 15*) for thus using my arrows against him who had restored them to me, and at the same time could not bear the thought of being indebted for any thing to a man whom I so abhor'd.' This, as Brumoy judiciously observes, is spirited, but not agreeable to the conduct of Sophocles; as the propriety of character is destroy'd by making Ulysses consent to the restoration of the arrows, and likewise by the ungenerous behaviour of Philoctetes in endeavouring to kill his benefactor.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Let go my arm.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I will not ;

Shall I not slay my enemy ?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

O ! no,

'Twou'd cast dishonour on us both.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Thou know'st

These Grecian chiefs are loud pretending boasters,
Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know it ; but remember, I restor'd
Thy arrows to thee, and thou hast no cause
For rage, or for complaint against thy friend.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I own thy goodness ; thou hast shewn thyself
Worthy thy birth, no son of Sisyphus,
But of Achilles, who on earth preserv'd
A fame unspotted, and amongst the dead
Still shines superior, an illustrious shade.

N E O P

No son of Sisyphus. See note p. 228. The injuries he had received from Ulysses are always uppermost in his thoughts, and he takes every opportunity of shewing his repentment of them,

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Joyful I thank thee for a father's praise,
And for my own; but listen to my words,
And mark me well; misfortunes, which the gods
Inflict on mortals, they perforce must bear,
But when oppress'd by voluntary woes
They make themselves unhappy; they deserve not
Our pity or our pardon; such art thou;
Thy savage soul, impatient of advice,
Rejects the wholesome counsel of thy friend,
And treats him like a foe; but I will speak,
Jove be my witness! therefore hear my words,
And grave them in thy heart; the dire disease
Thou long hast suffer'd is from angry heav'n,
Which thus afflicts thee for thy rash approach
To the fell serpent, which on Chrysa's shore
Watch'd o'er the sacred treasures; know beside,
That whilst the sun in yonder east shall rise,
Or in the west decline, distemper'd still
Thou ever shalt remain, unless to Troy
Thy willing mind transport thee; there the sons
Of Æsculapius shall restore thee, there
By my assistance shalt thou conquer Troy;

I

I know it well; for that prophetic sage,
 The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold
 It shou'd be so; 'proud Troy (he added then)
 'This very year must fall, if not, my life
 'Shall answer for the falsehood:' therefore yield;
 Thus to be deem'd the first of Grecians, thus
 By Pæan's fav'rite sons to be restor'd,
 And thus mark'd out the conqueror of Troy,
 Is sure distinguish'd happiness.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! life

Detested, why wilt thou still keep me here!
 Why not dismiss me to the tomb? alas!
 What can I do? how can I disbelieve
 My gen'rous friend? I must consent, and yet
 Can I do this, and look upon the fun?
 Can I behold my friends, will they forgive,
 Will they associate with me after this?
 And you, ye heav'nly orbs that roll around me,

How

How can I disbelieve, &c Philoctetes, moved by the generosity of Neoptolemus in restoring the arrows, is almost persuaded to lay aside his resentment and sail for Troy, but at the same time cannot bear the thought of joining Ulysses and the Atridae; this doubt and uncertainty causes a new situation in the drama, which keeps up the attention of the audience. One cannot help observing with what a variety of interesting circumstances Sophocles has contrived to embellish a subject so simple as to appear at first sight incapable of admitting any.

How will you bear to see me link'd with those
 Who have destroy'd me, ev'n the sons of Atreus,
 Ev'n with Ulysses, source of all my woes?
 My suff'rings past I cou'd forget, but O!
 I dread the woes to come, for well I know
 When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
 Unnumber'd crimes, and ills to ills succeed.
 It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
 Shou'dst thus advise me, whom it ill becomes
 To think of Troy; I rather had believ'd
 Thou wou'dst have sent me far, far off from those
 Who have defrauded thee of thy just right,
 And gave thy arms away; are these the men
 Whom thou wou'dst serve? whom thou wou'dst thus compel me
 To save and to defend? it must not be.
 Remember, O! my son, the solemn oath
 Thou gav'st to bear me to my native soil;
 Do this, my friend, remain thyself at Scyros,
 And leave these wretches to be wretched still.
 Thus shalt thou merit double thanks, from me,
 And from my father; nor by succour giv'n
 To vile betrayers, prove thyself as vile.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou say'st most truly; yet confide in heav'n,

Trust to thy friend, and leave this hated place.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

Leave it? for whom? for Troy and the Atridæ?

These wounds forbid it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

They shall all be heal'd,

Where I will carry thee.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

An idle tale

Thou tell'st me, surely, dost thou not?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I speak

What best may serve us both.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

But, speaking thus,

Dost thou not fear th' offended gods?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Why fear them?

Can I offend the gods by doing good?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

What good? to whom? to me or to th' Atridæ?

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I am thy friend, and therefore wou'd persuade thee.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And therefore give me to my foes.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

Let not misfortunes thus transport thy soul
To rage and bitterness.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou woud'st destroy me:

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou know'st me not.

PHILOCTETES.

I know th' Atridæ well,

Who left me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They did; yet they perhaps,
Ev'n they, O! Philoctetes, may preserve thee.

PHILOCTETES.

I never will to Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What's to be done?

Since I can ne'er persuade thee, I submit;
Live on in misery.

PHILOCTETES.

Then, let me suffer;

Suffer I must; but, O! perform thy promise;
Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home

Instant, my friend, nor ever call back Troy
To my remembrance; I have felt enough
From Troy already.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Let us go, prepare.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! glorious found!

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Bear thyself up.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I will,

If possible.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

But how shall I escape

The wrath of Greece?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

O! think not of it.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What.

If they shou'd waste my kingdom?

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I'll be there.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Alas! what canst thou do?

P H I L O C -

PHILOCTETES.

And with these arrows

Of my Alcides——

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

PHILOCTETES.

Drive

Thy foes before me; not a Greek shall dare
Approach thy borders.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If thou wilt do this,

Salute the earth, and instant hence. Away.

S C E N E IV.

HERCULES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS,
PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

HERCULES descends and speaks.

Stay, son of Pæan; lo! to thee 'tis giv'n

Once more to see and hear thy lov'd Alcides,

Who

Stay, son of Pæan &c. Hercules after a life spent in the laborious service of virtue, was admitted into heaven by his father Jupiter, and rank'd among the gods. Agreeably to his character whilst upon earth, he leaves the regions of peace and happiness only to serve his country and his friend. To justify the poet, with regard to this appearance of a deity, it may not be improper here to observe, that Philoctetes is described as fierce and inexorable, with a mind sower'd by injuries, and a heart harden'd by calamity; he is not to be soften'd by the art and subtlety of Ulysses, nor subdu'd by the honour and generosity of Neoptolemus; a change of will could not therefore take place

Who for thy sake hath left yon heav'nly mansions,
 And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove;
 To turn thee from the paths thou mean'st to tread,
 And guide thy footsteps right; therefore attend.
 Thou know'st what toils, what labours I endur'd,
 E'er I by virtue gain'd immortal fame;
 Thou too like me by toils must rise to glory;
 Thou too, must suffer, e'er thou can'st be happy;
 Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls,
 Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue rais'd
 To highest rank, and leader of the war,
 Paris, it's hateful author, shalt thou slay,
 Lay waste proud Troy, and send thy trophies home,
 Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy fire
 On OËta's top: the gifts which Greece bestows
 Must thou reserve to grace my fun'ral pile,
 And be a monument to after ages

Of

place without departing from that propriety of character which Sophocles always religiously observes. The descent of Hercules is, on this account, both necessary and beautiful; for though in some of the Greek tragedies, the interposition of the gods can perhaps hardly be justified, the severest critic will, I believe, here acknowledge the 'dignus vindice nodus' of Horace. To the manner of this appearance and the machinery made use of on the occasion we are left entire strangers; we have no lights from antiquity concerning the decorations of the theatre, and are only told in general, that they were made with the utmost splendor and magnificence; the character of Hercules during his short stay is sustain'd with great dignity; he says no more than what is absolutely necessary on the occasion, and then reascends.

Of these all-conq'ring arms.—Son of Achilles,

[turning to Neoptolemus.

(For now to thee I speak) remember this,
 Without his aid thou can'st not conquer Troy,
 Nor Philoctetes without thee succeed;
 Go then, and, like two lions in the field
 Roaming for prey, guard ye each other well;
 My Æsculapius will I fend ev'n now
 To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy;
 But when you lay the vanquish'd city waste,
 Be careful that you venerate the gods;
 For far above all other gifts doth Jove,
 Th' almighty father, hold true piety;
 Whether we live or dye, that still survives
 Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

~~NEOPTOLEMUS.~~

Once more to let me hear that wish'd-for voice,
 To see thee after so long time, was bliss
 I cou'd not hope for. O! I will obey
 Thy great commands most willingly.

PHILOC-

Be careful, &c. This is supposed by the commentators to convey a kind of prophetic censure of Neoptolemus, who after his return to Troy murder'd the aged Priam, even at the altar of Hercean Jove.

Whether we live or die, &c. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, c. 14, v. 8.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

And I.

H E R C U L E S.

Delay not then; for, lo! a prosp'rous wind
Swells in thy fail; the time invites, adieu.

[Hercules reascends.

S C E N E V.

P H I L O C T E T E S, U L Y S S E S, N E O P T O L E M U S,
C H O R U S.

P H I L O C T E T E S.

I will but pay my salutations here,
And instantly depart——To thee, my cave,
Where I so long have dwelt, I bid farewell;
And you, ye nymphs, who on the wat'ry plains
Deign to reside, farewell; farewell the noise
Of beating waves, which I so oft have heard
From the rough sea, which by the black winds driv'n
O'erwhelm'd me shiv'ring; oft th' Hermæan mount
Echo'd my plaintive voice, by wint'ry storms
Afflicted, and return'd me groan for groan.
Now, ye fresh fountains, each Lycæan spring,

I

Th' Hermæan mount. A mountain in Lemnos; though some are of opinion that the word Hermæan is only an epithet generally appropriated to mountains, from Hermes or Mercury, the god of hills and groves.

Each Lycæan spring. Fountains sacred to Apollo Lycius.

I leave you now; alas! I little thought
To leave you ever; and thou fea-girt isle,
Lemnos, farewell; permit me to depart
By thee unblam'd, and with a prosp'rous gale
To go where fate demands, where kindest friends
By counsel urge me, where all-powerful Jove
In his unerring wisdom hath decreed.

C H O R U S.

Let us be gone, and to the ocean nymphs
Our humble pray'rs prefer that they wou'd all
Propitious smile, and grant us safe return.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

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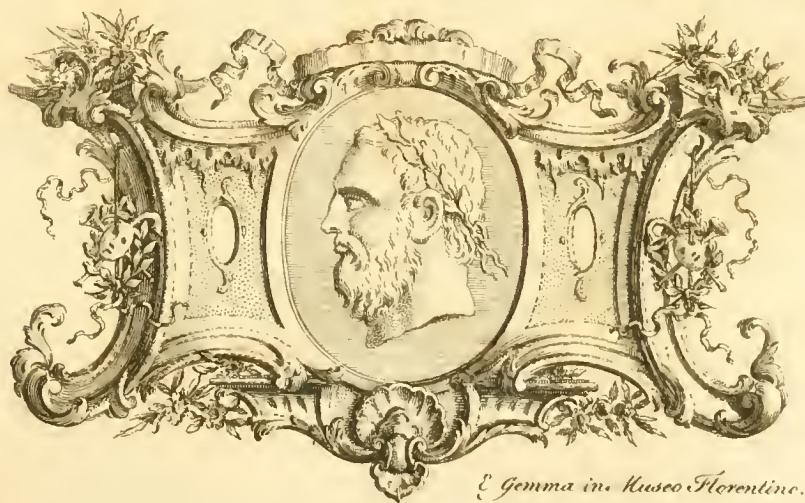
T H E
T R A G E D I E S
O F
S O P H O C L E S,

From the G R E E K;

By T H O M A S F R A N C K L I N, M. A.

Fellow of Trinity-College, and Greek Professor in the University of Cambridge.

V O L. II.



Æ Gemma in Museo Florentino.

L O N D O N:

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Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, located in the lower middle section of the page.

ANTIGONE.

Dramatis Personæ.

C R E O N, king of Thebes.

E U R Y D I C E, Wife of CREON.

H Æ M O N, Son of CREON.

A N T I G O N E, Daughter of OEDIPUS.

I S M E N E, sister of ANTIGONE.

T I R E S I A S, a prophet.

A MESSENGER, GUARD, SERVANT and ATTENDANTS.

C H O R U S,

Composed of antient MEN of Thebes.

A N T I G O N E.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

A N T I G O N E, I S M E N E.

A N T I G O N E.

O! My dear sister, my best-lov'd Ismene,
• Is there an evil, by the wrath of Jove
Reserv'd for OEdipus' unhappy race,
We have not felt already? sorrow and shame,
And bitterness and anguish, all that's sad,

All

O! my dear sister, &c. Eteocles and Polynices, sons of the unfortunate Oedipus, having an equal claim to the kingdom of Thebes, had agreed to divide the power, and to reign year by year alternately; but Eteocles stepping first into the Throne, and tasting the sweets of sovereignty, broke the contract, and maintain'd himself in the possession of his dominions. Polynices, in revenge, raised an army of Argians, and made an incursion on Thebes; a battle ensued, and after much slaughter on both sides, the brothers agreed to decide it by single combat; they fought, and were slain by each other.
After

All that's distressful hath been ours, and now
 This dreadful edict from the tyrant comes
 To double our misfortunes; hast thou heard
 What harsh commands he hath impos'd on all,
 Or art thou still to know what future ills
 Our foes have yet in store to make us wretched?

I S M E N E.

Since that unhappy day, Antigone,
 When by each other's hand our brothers fell,
 And Greece dismiss'd her armies, I have heard
 Nought that cou'd give or joy or grief to me.

A N T I G O N E.

I thought thou wert a stranger to the tidings,
 And therefore call'd thee forth, that here alone
 I might impart them to thee.

I S M E N E.

O! what are they?

For something dreadful labours in thy breast.

A N T I G O N E.

After the death of the brothers the kingdom of Thebes devolved to their uncle Creon, whose first act of supreme power was an edict forbidding all rites of sepulture to Polynices, as a traitor; and pronouncing instant death on any who should dare to bury him. Here the action of the tragedy commences, the subject of which is the piety of Antigone in opposition to the edict of Creon, with the distresses consequent upon it. The time and place are exactly mark'd out in the first scene, where Antigone calls her sister out of the palace into the adjoining area, to inform her of the decree which had been issued out on the preceding day, and her resolutions concerning it.

A N T I G O N E.

Know then, from Creon, our indulgent lord,
 Our hapless brothers met a different fate,
 To honour one, and one to infamy
 He hath consign'd; with fun'ral rites he grac'd
 The body of our dear Eteocles,
 Whilst Polynices' wretched carcase lies
 Unbury'd, unlamented, left expos'd
 A feast for hungry vultures on the plain;
 No pitying friend will dare to violate

The

With fun'ral rites, &c. Of all the honours paid to the dead, the care of their funerals was look'd upon by the ancients as most necessary and indispensable; as to be deprived of sepulture was accounted the greatest misfortune, and the highest injury. No imprecation was therefore so terrible as that any person might *αδαιτος εκταφτειν χρονος*, 'die destitute of burial:' it was not to be wonder'd at that they were thus solicitous about the interment of their dead, when they were strongly possess'd with the opinion that the souls of the deceased could not be admitted into the Elysian shades, but were forced to wander desolate and alone, till their bodies were committed to the earth. Nor was it sufficient to be honour'd with the solemn performance of their funeral rites, except their bodies were prepared for burial by their relations, and inter'd in the sepulchres of their fathers; we must not therefore be surpris'd to find the whole play of Antigone turning on this single incident; for though the burial of a dead body would make but an indifferent foundation for a modern tragedy, it is a subject of dignity and importance, and highly suitable to the notions and genius of antiquity.

Unlamented. This was the judgment which God denounced against Jehoiakim, king of Judah: 'they shall not lament for him, saying, ah! my brother, or ah! sister; they shall not lament for him, saying, ah! lord, or ah! his glory; he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, &c. Jerem. 22, v. 18, 19. The customs and manners of the Greeks were originally drawn from the eastern nations, which accounts for the similitude so observable in Sophocles and other heathen writers with some parts of holy writ.

The tyrant's harsh command, for public death
 Awaits th' offender; Creon comes himself
 To tell us of it, such is our condition;
 This is the crisis, this the hour, Ismene,
 That must declare thee worthy of thy birth,
 Or shew thee mean, base, and degenerate.

I S M E N E.

What woud'st thou have me do? defy his pow'r?
 Contemn the laws?

A N T I G O N E.

To act with me, or not:
 Consider and resolve.

I S M E N E.

What daring deed
 Woud'st thou attempt? what is it? speak.

A N T I G O N E.

To join

And take the body, my Ismene.

I S M E N E.

Ha!

And woud'st thou dare to bury it, when thus
 We are forbidden?

A N T I G O N E.

Ay, to bury HIM;

He is my brother, and thine too, Ismene;
 Therefore consent or not, I have determin'd
 I'll not disgrace my birth.

I S M E N E.

Hath not the king
 Pronounc'd it death to all?

A N T I G O N E.

He hath no right,
 No pow'r to keep me from my own.

I S M E N E.

Alas!

Remember our unhappy father's fate,
 His eyes torn out by his own fatal hand,
 Oppress'd with shame and infamy he dy'd;
 Fruit of his crimes! a mother, and a wife,
 Dreadful alliance! self-devoted, fell;
 And last, in one sad day, Eteocles
 And Polynices by each other slain.
 Left as we are, deserted and forlorn,
 What from our disobedience can we hope

Vol. II.

B

But

Consent or not, &c. The characters of Antigone and Ismene are an exact counterpart to those of Electra and Chrysothemis; the fierceness and resolution of the one is contrasted by the softness and timidity of the other. The sentiments are nearly the same throughout, and indeed, the similitude of circumstances consider'd, this was almost unavoidable.

But misery and ruin? poor weak women,
 Helpless, nor form'd by nature to contend
 With powerful man; we are his subjects too;
 'Therefore to this, and worse than this, my sister,
 We must submit: for me, in humblest pray'r
 Will I address me to th' infernal pow'rs
 For pardon of that crime which well they know
 Sprang from necessity, and then obey;
 Since to attempt what we can never hope
 To execute, is folly all and madness.

A N T I G O N E.

Wert thou to proffer what I do not ask,
 Thy poor assistance, I wou'd scorn it now:
 Act as thou wilt; I'll bury him myself;
 Let me perform but that, and death is welcome:
 I'll do the pious deed, and lay me down
 By my dear brother; loving and belov'd
 We'll rest together: to the pow'rs below,
 'Tis fit we pay obedience; longer there
 We must remain, than we can breathe on earth,
 There I shall dwell for ever; thou, mean time,
 What the gods hold most precious may'st despise.

I S M E N E.

I reverence the gods; but, in defiance

A N T I G O N E.

II

Of laws, and unassisted to do this,
It were most dang'rous.

A N T I G O N E.

That be thy excuse,

Whilst I prepare the fun'ral pile.

I S M E N E.

Alas !

I tremble for thee.

B 2

A N T I G O N E.

I tremble for thee &c. The Antigone of Rotrou, an old French poet, whom Brumoy calls Corneille's master, is a pretty exact copy, and in many parts an almost literal translation of Sophocles ; it seems to be written with spirit, as the reader will see by the following quotation.

ISMEN. Ah, que vous me causez une frayeur extrême !

ANTIG. Ne m'épouvantez pas, & tremblez sur vous-même.

ISMEN. Soyez secrète au moins, comme-je vous promets
Que par moi ce dessein ne se sçaura jamais.

ANTIG. Si rien est à cacher, cachez votre foiblesse,
Je fais gloire pour moi que ma vertu paroisse.

ISMEN. Comme dans les dangers vous vous précipitez !

ANTIG. Avec autant d'ardeur que vous les évitez.

ISMEN. Je vous l'ai dit cent fois, cette œuvre sera vaine.

ANTIG. Bien, mon pouvoir cessant fera cesser ma peine.

ISMEN. Mais ce n'est pas assez d'entreprendre ardemment :
L'honneur de l'entreprise est en l'événement.

ANTIG. Vos raisons, comme vous, sont de si peu de force,
Que, loin de m'arrêter, cet obstacle m'amorce.
Laissez indifférent mon bon ou mauvais sort ;
Voyez, si je péris, mon naufrage du port.
Pour moi je tiens plus chère & plus digne d'envie

A N T I G O N E.

A N T I G O N E.

Tremble for thyself,

And not for me.

I S M E N E.

O! do not tell thy purpose,

I beg thee, do not; I shall ne'er betray thee.

A N T I G O N E.

I'd have it known; and I shall hate thee more

For thy concealment, than, if loud to all,

Thou woud'st proclaim the deed.

I S M E N E.

Thou hast a heart

Too daring, and ill-fuited to thy fate.

A N T I G O N E.

I know my duty, and I'll pay it there

Where 'twill be best accepted.

I S M E N E.

Coud'st thou do it;

But 'tis not in thy pow'r.

A N T I G O N E.

Une honorable mort qu'une honteuse vie ;
 Et de mes ans enfin voir terminer le cours
 Ne fera qu'arriver où je vais tous les jours.

ISMEN. Allez donc : que le Ciel pour vous & pour mon frere
 Conduise ce dessein mieux que je ne l'espere !
 Mais vos soins, si mon cœur ne m'abuse aujourd'hui,
 Préparent un cercueil plus pour vous que pour lui.

A N T I G O N E

When I know that
It will be time enough to quit my purpose.

I S M E N E.

It cannot be; 'tis folly to attempt it.

A N T I G O N E.

Go on, and I shall hate thee; our dead brother,
He too shall hate thee as his bitt'rest foe;
Go, leave me here to suffer for my rashness;
Whate'er befalls, it cannot be so dreadful
As not to dye with honour.

I S M E N E.

Then farewell,
Since thou wilt have it so; and know, Ismene
Pities thy weakness, but admires thy virtue.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream,
Ne'er did the golden eye of day

On

By Dirce's sweetly-flowing stream, &c. The kingdom of Thebes, which had been torn to pieces by the dissention of the two brothers, being at length by their deaths restored to peace and tranquility, the principal and most antient inhabitants, who form the chorus, are brought together with the utmost propriety to sing a song of triumph on the occasion: as they are the friends and counsellors of Creon, we find them condemning Polynices as author of the war, and rejoicing in his defeat. George Rataller, the only Latin translator who has ever done justice to Sophocles, has turn'd this noble chorus into a good sapphic ode.

On Thebes with fairer lustre beam,
 Or shine with more auspicious ray.
 See, the proud Argive with his silver shield,
 And glitt'ring armour quits the hostile plain;
 No longer dares maintain the luckless field,
 But vanquish'd flies, nor checks the loosen'd rein.
 With dreadful clangor, like the bird of Jove,
 On snowy wings descending from above,
 His vaunted pow'rs to this devoted land
 In bitt'rest wrath did Polynices lead,
 With crested helmets, and a num'rous band
 He came, and fondly hop'd that Thebes shou'd bleed.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

High on the lofty tow'r he stood,
 And view'd th' encircled gates below,
 With spears that thirsted for our blood,
 And seem'd to scorn th' unequal foe;

But

With dreadful clangor, &c. Ratallerus renders it thus,

Ut Jovis summo veniens olympo
 Armiger plumis coopertus albis,
 Devolat, latè strepituq; acuto
 Æthera complet.

Constitit celsæ super arcis ædes,
 Ense munitus, galeâq; & armis,
 Undequaque hactis inhiabat urbi
 Sanguine tinctis.

Victus at fugit trepidè, priusquam
 Possèt infanas fatiare fauces,
 Et nimis nostro cupidum cruore
 Tingere guttur.

But fraught with vengeance, e'er the rising flame
 Cou'd waste our bulwarks, or our walls surround,
 Mars to assist the fiery serpent came,
 And brought the tow'ring eagle to the ground.
 That god, who hates the boastings of the proud,
 Saw the rude violence of th' exulting croud;
 Already now the triumph was prepar'd,
 The wreath of vict'ry, and the festal song,
 When Jove the clash of golden armour heard,
 And hurl'd his thunder on the guilty throng.

S T R O P H E II.

Then Capaneus, elate with pride,
 Fierce as the rapid whirlwind came,

Eager

The fiery serpent, &c. By the dragon or fiery serpent, we are to understand the Theban army attack'd by the eagle Polynices. The scholiasts, who are always full of whimsical conjectures, will needs have it that the Thebans are here call'd serpents as descendants of Draco, the son of Mars and Tilphosa, or, as the sons of Cadmus, who sow'd the serpent's teeth that sprung up into arm'd men, as related in the third book of Ovid's metamorphoses; though it is, after all, most probable that Sophocles meant no more than a comparison of the two armies with creatures of most remarkable enmity to each other, in imitation of his great master Homer, who has made use of this very image on a similar occasion. See *Iliad*, b. 14, v. 201, with an imitation of it by Virgil, *Æn.* b. 11, v. 751.

That god who hates, &c. *φιλῶσι ὁ Θεὸς* (says Herodotus) *τα ὑπερηχόντα πάντα κόλλειν*, 'God loveth to cut off every thing that is proud'; agreeable to which is the sentiment of the holy psalmist, 'The Lord preserveth the faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer.' Psalm 31, v. 19.

Then Capaneus, &c. Capaneus was one of the seven captains who came against Thebes: after he had mounted to the top of the *κλιμακες*, or scaling ladders, he was beat down with stones and slain; which gave the poets an opportunity of reporting him to have been struck dead with lightning. Statius calls him, 'superûm contemptor,' 'a contemner of the gods.'

Eager he seem'd on ev'ry side
 To spread the all-devouring flame ;
 But soon he felt the winged light'ning's blast,
 By angry heav'n with speedy vengeance sent,
 Down from the lofty turrets headlong cast,
 For his foul crimes he met the punishment.
 Each at his gate long time the leaders strove,
 Then fled, and left their arms to conqu'ring Jove ;
 Save the unhappy death-devoted pair,
 The wretched brethren, who unconquer'd stood,
 With ranc'rous hate inspir'd, and fell despair,
 They reek'd their vengeance in each other's blood.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

And lo! with smiles propitious see
 To Thebes, for num'rous carrs renown'd,
 The goddess comes, fair victory,
 With fame and endless glory crown'd!
 Henceforth, no longer vex'd by war's alarms,
 Let all our sorrows, all our labours cease ;
 Come, let us quit the din of ratt'ling arms,
 And fill our temples with the songs of peace.
 The god of Thebes shall guide our steps aright,
 And crown with many a lay the festive night.

But

Each at his gate, &c. The Greek is, the seven leaders stood at the seven gates.

But see, still anxious for his native land,
Our king, Menæceus' valiant son, appear;
With some fair omen by the god's command
He comes to meet his aged council here.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T I.

A N T I G O N E.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

C R E O N, C H O R U S.

C R E O N.

AT length our empire, shook by civil broils,
 The gods to peace and safety have restor'd;
 Wherefore, my friends, you had our late request
 That you shou'd meet us here; for well I know
 Your firm allegiance to great Laius, next
 To OEdipus, and his unhappy sons;
 These by each other's hand untimely slain,
 To me the sceptre doth of right descend,
 As next in blood: never can man be known,
 His mind, his will, his passions ne'er appear
 Till pow'r and office call them forth; for me,
 'Tis my firm thought, and I have held it ever,
 That he who rules and doth not follow that
 Which wisdom counsels, but restrain'd by fear
 Shuts up his lips, must be the worst of men;
 Nor do I deem him worthy who prefers
 A friend, how dear soever, to his country.
 Shou'd I behold (witness all-seeing Jove)
 This city wrong'd, I never wou'd be silent,

Never

Never wou'd make the foe of Thebes my friend,
 For on her safety must depend our own ;
 And if she flourish we can never want
 Assistance or support: thus wou'd I act,
 And therefore have I sent my edict forth
 Touching the sons of OEdipus, commanding
 That they shou'd bury him who nobly fought
 And dy'd for Thebes, the good Eteocles,
 Gracing his mem'ry with each honour due
 To the illustrious dead ; for Polynices,
 Abandon'd exile, for a brother's blood
 Thirsting insatiate, he who wou'd in flames
 Have wasted all, his country, and his gods,
 And made you slaves, I have decreed he lye
 Unburied, his vile carcase to the birds
 And hungry dogs a prey, there let him rot
 Inglorious, 'tis my will ; for ne'er from me
 Shall vice inherit virtue's due reward,
 But him alone who is a friend to Thebes,
 Living or dead shall Creon rev'rence still.

C 2

CHORUS.

Him alone, &c. Creon, conscious to himself that the edict forbidding the burial of Polynices must be highly unpopular, and would probably be construed by his subjects as an act of arbitrary power, calls a council of the principal and most antient inhabitants of Thebes, to whom he artfully represents his conduct, not as the effect of private resentment, but of his zealous regard for the public welfare ; and as he was apprehensive that the friends of Polynices would, in spite
 of

C H O R U S.

Son of Menæceus, 'twas thy great behest
Thus to reward them both; thine is the pow'r
O'er all supreme, the living and the dead.

C R E O N.

Be careful then my orders are obey'd.

C H O R U S.

O! fir, to younger hands commit the task.

C R E O N.

I have appointed some to watch the body.

C H O R U S.

What then remains for us?

C R E O N.

To see that none

By your connivance violate the law.

C H O R U S.

Scarce will the man be found so fond of death
As to attempt it.

C R E O N.

of all his precautions, bury the body, he prepares them for that severity with which he had resolved to treat the offender. The council, we may observe, is composed of slaves, who are obliged to assent to what they could not approve, and submit to orders which they could not resist. By this lively representation of the evils and miseries of an arbitrary government, the poet pays an oblique compliment to his countrymen the Athenians, who would naturally take a pleasure in comparing it with the freedom and happiness of their own. The chorus, according to Horace, should indeed always appear as the friends of distressed virtue; but in this case Sophocles, we see, is excusable, as it could not be done, considering whom they are composed of, with any degree of propriety.

A N T I G O N E.

21

C R E O N.

Death is the reward
Of him who dares it; but oft'times by hope
Of fordid gain are men betray'd to ruin.

S C E N E II.

M E S S E N G E R, C R E O N, C H O R U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

O! king, I cannot boast, that hither sent
I came with speed, for oft my troubled thoughts
Have driv'n me back; oft to myself I said,
Why dost thou seek destruction? yet again
If thou report it not, from other tongues
Creon must hear the tale; and thou wilt suffer:
With doubts like these oppress'd, slowly I came,
And the short way seem'd like a tedious journey;
At length I come, resolv'd to tell thee all:
Whate'er th' event, I must submit to fate.

C R E O N.

Whence are thy fears, and why this hesitation?

M E S S E N G E R.

First for myself; I merit not thy wrath;

It

First for myself, &c. The servant in Terence prefaces his tale with the like formality;

Here, primum te arbitrari quod res est velim,
Quicquid hujus factum est, culpâ non factum est meâ.

It was not I, nor have I seen the man
Who did the guilty deed.

C R E O N.

Something of weight
Thou hast t' impart, by this unusual care
To guard thee from our anger.

M E S S E N G E R.

Fear will come
Where danger is.

C R E O N.

Speak, and thou hast thy pardon.

M E S S E N G E R.

The body of Polynices some rash hand
Hath bury'd, scatter'd o'er his corps the dust,
And fun'ral rites perform'd.

C R E O N.

Who dar'd do this?

M E S S E N G E R.

'Tis yet unknown; no mark of instrument
Is left behind; the earth still level all,
Nor worn by track of chariot wheel; the guard,
Who watch'd that day, call it a miracle;
No tomb was rais'd; light lay the scatter'd earth,

As only meant t' avoid th' 'imputed curse;
 Nor cou'd we trace the steps of dog or beast
 Passing that way; instant a tumult rose,
 The guards accus'd each other; nought was prov'd,
 But each suspected each, and all deny'd,
 Off'ring in proof of innocence to grasp
 The burning steel, to walk thro' fire, and take
 Their solemn oath they knew not of the deed;
 At length, one mightier than the rest, propos'd
 (Nor cou'd we think of better means) that all
 Shou'd be to thee discover'd; 'twas my lot

To

As only meant, &c. In Greece the person was look'd on as accursed, and guilty of the greatest inhumanity, who pass'd by an unburied corps without casting dust or soft earth upon it, which in cases of necessity was consider'd as sufficient to gain the ghost's admission into Pluto's dominions; travellers, therefore, though in ever so much haste, if they met with a dead body, thought it their duty to sprinkle it three times in this manner. This custom is alluded to by Horace.

Quanquam festinas, non est mora longa, licebit
 Injecto ter pulvere, curras. Lib. 1, od. 28.

To grasp the burning steel. It was usual, in antient Greece, for persons accused of any considerable crime to clear themselves from the imputation, by taking a solemn oath that they were not guilty of it, at the same time holding in their hands a red hot iron call'd *Mudpos*, which, if they express'd no sense of pain, was admitted as a sufficient proof of their innocence.

To walk thro' fire. This method of clearing themselves is exactly similar to our Saxon custom of purgation by fire-ordeal, wherein the person accused pass'd blindfold and bare-footed over red-hot plough-shares. This is said to have been perform'd by Emma, the mother of Edward the confessor, to vindicate her honour from the scandal of incontinency with Alwyn, bishop of Winchester.

To bring th' unwelcome tidings, and I come
 To pour my news unwilling into ears,
 Unwilling to receive it, for I know
 None ever lov'd the messenger of ill.

C H O R U S.

To me it seems as if the hand of heav'n
 Were in this deed.

C R E O N.

Be silent, e'er my rage,
 Thou rash old man, pronounce thee fool and dotard;
 Horrid suggestion! think'st thou then, the gods
 Take care of men like these? wou'd they preserve,
 Or honour him who came to burn their altars,
 Profane their rites, and trample on their laws?
 Will they reward the bad? it cannot be:
 But well I know, the murm'ring citizens
 Brook'd not our mandate, shook their heads in secret,
 And ill-affected to me, wou'd not stoop
 Their haughty crests, or bend beneath my yoke;
 By hire corrupted, some of these have dar'd
 The vent'rous deed: gold is the worst of ills
 That ever plagu'd mankind; this wastes our cities,
 Drives forth their natives to a foreign soil,
 Taints the pure heart, and turns the virtuous mind

To basest deeds; artificer of fraud
 Supreme, and source of ev'ry wickedness:
 The wretch corrupted for this hateful purpose
 Must one day suffer; for, observe me well,
 As I revere that pow'r by whom I swear,
 Almighty Jove, if you conceal him from me,
 If to my eyes you do not bring the traitor,
 Know, death alone shall not suffice to glut
 My vengeance; living shall you hang in torments
 Till you confess, till you have learn'd from me
 There is a profit not to be desir'd,
 And own, dishonest gains have ruin'd more
 Than they have sav'd.

M E S S E N G E R.

O! king, may I depart,
 Or wait thy further orders.

C R E O N.

Know'st thou not
 Thy speech is hateful? hence.

M E S S E N G E R.

Wherefore, my lord?

C R E O N.

Know you not why?

A N T I G O N E.

M E S S E N G E R.

I but offend your ear,
They who have done the deed afflict your soul.

C R E O N.

Away; thy talk but makes thy guilt appear.

M E S S E N G E R.

My lord, I did not do it.

C R E O N.

Thou hast fold
Thy life for gain.

M E S S E N G E R.

'Tis cruel to suspect me.

C R E O N.

Thou talk'st it bravely; but, remember all,
Unless you do produce him, you shall find
The mis'ries which on ill-got wealth await.

[Exit.

M E S S E N G E R.

Wou'd he were found! that we must leave to fate;
Be't as it may, I never will return;
Thus safe beyond my hopes, 'tis fit I pay
My thanks to the kind gods who have preserv'd me.

[Exit.

SCENE

ANTIGONE.

27

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Since first this active world began,
 Nature is busy all in ev'ry part;
 But passing all in wisdom and in art,
 Superior shines inventive man:

Fearless of wint'ry winds, and circling waves,
 He rides the ocean, and the tempest braves;
 On him unwearied earth with lavish hand,
 Immortal goddess, all her bounty pours,
 Patient beneath the rigid plough's command,
 Year after year she yields her plenteous stores.

ANTISTROPHE I.

To drive the natives of the wood
 From their rude haunts, or in the cruel snare,
 To catch the wing'd inhabitants of air,
 Or trap the scaly brood;

D 2

To

Since first this &c. This intermede, or song of the chorus, seems to have less connection with the subject of the tragedy, than perhaps any other in Sophocles; it describes the extensive range of human science, and its application to good or evil purposes, according to the dispositions of men. 'Cette morale (says Brumoy) tombe sur le pretendu coupable, qui a eu l'adresse de rendre les derniers devoirs à Polynice, malgré l'attention des gardes, sans pouvoir toutefois eviter le supplice qui l'attend.' But surely the refinement of French criticism is required to discover an allusion so distant: the ode however abounds in fine sentiment and expression, and if not necessary to the business may, at least, be consider'd as an agreeable ornament of the drama.

To tame the fiery courser yet unbroke
 With the hard rein, or to the untry'd yoke
 To bend the mountain bull, who wildly free
 O'er the steep rocks had wander'd unconfin'd;
 These are the arts of mortal industry,
 And such the subtle pow'r of human kind.

S T R O P H E II.

By learning, and fair science crown'd,
 Behold him now full-fraught with wisdom's lore,
 The laws of nature anxious to explore,
 With depth of thought profound.
 But nought alas! can human wisdom see
 In the dark bosom of futurity.
 The pow'r of wisdom may awhile prevail,
 Awhile suspend a mortal's fleeting breath,
 But never can her fruitless arts avail
 To conquer fate, or stop the hand of death.

A N T I S T R O P H E. II.

Man's ever-active changeful will
 Sometimes to good shall bend his virtuous mind,
 Sometimes behold him to foul deeds inclin'd,
 And prone to ev'ry ill.
 Who guiltless keeps the laws is still approv'd
 By ev'ry tongue, and by his country lov'd;

But

But he who doth not, from his native land
 A wretched exile, far, O! far from me
 May he be driv'n, by angry heav'n's command,
 And live devote to shame and infamy.

C H O R U S.

Amazement! can it be Antigone,
 Or do my eyes deceive me! no, she comes.
 O! wretched daughter of a wretched father,
 Hast thou transgress'd the laws, and art thou ta'en
 In this advent'rous deed, unhappy maid?

S C E N E IV.

A N T I G O N E, G U A R D, C H O R U S.

G U A R D.

Behold the woman who hath done the deed;
 I'th' very act of burial we surpris'd her.
 Where is the king?

C H O R U S.

Return'd as we cou'd wish;
 Ev'n now he comes this way.

S C E N E

Far, O! far from me, &c. The Greek is *μὴ μετὰ παρῆς γενῆται*, 'ne.
 'mecom habitet,' 'let not such a one live under the same root with me.'
Vetabo, says Horace,

—————sub iisdem

Sit trabibus, fragilemve mecum

Solvat Phaselum.

Lib. 3. od. 2.

A N T I G O N E.

S C E N E V.

CREON, ANTIGONE, GUARD, CHORUS.

C R E O N.

Whom have we here?

Doth justice smile upon us?

G U A R D.

O! my lord,

Never shou'd man too confident assert,
 Much less by oath shou'd bind himself to aught,
 For soon our judgments change, and one opinion
 Destroys another; by thy threats alarm'd
 But now, I vow'd I never wou'd return,
 Yet thus preserv'd, beyond my hopes, I come;
 Bound by that duty which I owe to thee
 And to my country, to bring here this virgin,
 Whom, as she sprinkled o'er her brother's dust
 The vary'd wreath, we seiz'd; the willing task
 Was mine, nor as of late by lot determin'd.
 Receive her then, O! king, judge and condemn
 The guilty, as it best becomes thy wisdom;
 Henceforth I stand acquitted.

C R E O N.

But say how,

Where didst thou find her?

G U A R D.

G U A R D.

To say all, 'twas she
Who buried Polynices.

C R E O N.

Art thou sure?

G U A R D.

These eyes beheld her.

C R E O N.

But, say, how discover'd?

G U A R D.

Thus then it was; no sooner had I left thee
Than mindful of thy wrath, with careful hands
From off the putrid carcase we remov'd
The scatter'd dust, then to avoid the stench,
Exhaling noisome, to a hill retir'd;
There watch'd at distance, till the mid-day sun
Scorch'd o'er our heads; sudden a storm arose,
Shook every leaf, and rattled thro' the grove,
Filling the troubled element; we clos'd
Our eyes, and patient bore the wrath of heav'n:
At length the tempest ceas'd; when we beheld
This virgin issuing forth, and heard her cries
Distressful, like the plaintive bird who views
The plunder'd nest, and mourns her ravish'd young;

E v' n

Ev'n thus the maid, when on the naked corse
 She cast her eyes, loud shriek'd, and curs'd the hand
 'That did the impious deed, then sprinkled o'er
 'The crumbled earth, and from a brazen urn
 Of richest work to the lov'd relicks thrice
 Her due libations pour'd; we saw, and strait
 Pursu'd her; unappall'd she seem'd, and still
 As we did question her, confess'd it all.
 It pleas'd, and yet methought it griev'd me too.
 To find ourselves releas'd from woes is bliss
 Supreme, but thus to see our friends unhappy
 Embitters all; I must be thankful still
 For my own safety, which I hold most dear.

C R E O N.

Speak thou, who bend'st to earth thy drooping head;
 Dost thou deny the fact?

A N T I G O N E.

Deny it? no;

'Twas I.

C R E O N. [to the guard.

Retire, for thou art free, and now [turning to Ant.
 Be brief, and tell me; heard'st thou our decree?

A N T I G O N E

I did; 'twas public; how cou'd I avoid it?

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

And dar'st thou then to disobey the law?

A N T I G O N E.

I had it not from Jove, nor the just gods
 Who rule below; nor cou'd I ever think
 A mortal's law of pow'r or strength sufficient
 To abrogate th' unwritten law divine,
 Immutable, eternal, not like these
 Of yesterday, but made e'er time began.
 Shall man persuade me then to violate
 Heav'n's great commands, and make the gods my foes?
 Without thy mandate, death had one day come;
 For who shall 'scape it? and if now I fall
 A little sooner, 'tis the thing I wish.
 To those who live in misery like me,
 Believe me, king, 'tis happiness to dye;
 Without remorse I shall embrace my fate;
 But to my brother had I left the rites
 Of sepulture unpaid, I then indeed
 Had been most wretched; this to thee may seem
 Madness and folly; if it be, 'tis fit
 I shou'd act thus, it but resembles thee.

VOL. II.

E

C R E O N.

If it be &c. Literally translated it wou'd be 'I talk foolishly to a fool;' this is exactly what Electra says to Clytemnæstra.

See Electra, v. 1. p. 131.

C R E O N.

Sprung from a fire perverse and obstinate,
 Like him, she cannot bend beneath misfortune ;
 But know, the proudest hearts may be subdu'd ;
 Hast thou not mark'd the hardest steel by fire
 Made soft and flexible? myself have seen
 By a slight rein the fiery courser held.

'Tis not for slaves to be so haughty ; yet
 This proud offender, not content, it seems,
 To violate my laws, adds crime to crime ;
 Smiles at my threats, and glories in her guilt ;
 If I shou'd suffer her to 'scape my vengeance,
 She were the man, not I ; but tho' she sprang
 Ev'n from my sister, were I bound to her
 By ties more dear than is Hercæan Jove,
 She shou'd not 'scape ; her sister too I find
 Accomplice in the deed ; go, call her forth,

[to one of the attendants.

She is within, I saw her raving there,
 Her senses lost, the common fate of those

Who

Hercæan Jove. Jupiter Hercæus, so call'd from being the guardian of every man's private habitation : in times of war and public calamity, altars were erected to him, to which the unhappy fled as an asylum. Priam is reported to have been slain before one of these, as is alluded to by Ovid,

Cum nihil Hercæi profuit ara Jovis.

Ov. in ibin.

The common fate &c. According to the old adage.

Quos deus vult perdere, dementat prius.

Who practise dark and deadly wickedness.

[turning to Antigone.

I cannot bear to see the guilty stand
 Convicted of their crimes, and yet pretend
 To gloss them o'er with specious names of virtue.

A N T I G O N E.

I am thy captive; thou woud'st have my life;
 Will that content thee?

C R E O N.

Yes; 'tis all I wish.

A N T I G O N E.

Why this delay then, when thou know'st my words
 To thee as hateful are, as thine to me?
 Therefore dispatch; I cannot live to do
 A deed more glorious; and so these wou'd all

[pointing to the Chorus.

Confess, were not their tongues restrain'd by fear;
 It is the tyrant's privilege, we know,
 To speak and act whate'er he please, uncensur'd.

C R E O N.

Lives there another in the land of Thebes,
 Who thinks as thou dost?

A N T I G O N E.

Yes, a thousand; these,

These think so too, but dare not utter it.

C R E O N.

Dost thou not blush?

A N T I G O N E.

For what? why blush to pay

A sister's duty?

C R E O N.

But, Eteocles,

Say, was not he thy brother too?

A N T I G O N E.

He was.

C R E O N.

Why then thus reverence him who least deserv'd it?

A N T I G O N E.

Perhaps that brother thinks not so.

C R E O N.

He must,

If thou pay'st equal honour to them both.

A N T I G O N E.

He was a brother, not a slave.

C R E O N.

He was. The original is, 'he was my brother by the same father, and by the same mother;' the Greek writers, though generally concise, are sometimes very prolix, as in the passage before us, where the sentiment takes up a whole line in the original, and is better express'd in these two words of the translation.

A N T I G O N E.

37

C R E O N.

One fought

Against that country, which the other fav'd.

A N T I G O N E.

But equal death the rites of sepulture

Decrees to both.

C R E O N.

What! reverence alike

The guilty and the innocent!

A N T I G O N E.

Perhaps

The gods below esteem it just.

C R E O N.

A foe

Though dead, shou'd as a foe be treated still.

A N T I G O N E.

My love shall go with thine, but not my hate.

C R E O N.

Go then, and love them in the tomb; but know,

No woman rules in Thebes, whilst Creon lives.

C H O R U S.

Lo! at the portal stands the fair Ismene,

Tears in her lovely eyes, a cloud of grief

Sits on her brow, wetting her beauteous cheek

With pious sorrows for a sister's fate.

C R E O N.

A N T I G O N E.

S C E N E VI.

ISMENE, ANTIGONE, CREON, CHORUS.

C R E O N.

Come forth thou serpent, little did I think
 That I had nourish'd two such deadly foes
 To suck my blood, and cast me from my throne:
 What say'st thou? wer't thou 'complice in the deed,
 Or wilt thou swear that thou art innocent?

I S M E N E.

I do acknowledge it, if she permit me,
 I was accomplice, and the crime was mine.

A N T I G O N E.

'Tis false, thou did'st refuse, nor wou'd I hold
 Communion with thee.

I S M E N E.

But in thy misfortunes
 Let me partake, my sister, let me be
 A fellow-suff'rer with thee.

A N T I G O N E.

Witness, death,
 And ye infernal gods, to which belongs
 The great, the glorious deed! I do not love
 These friends in word alone.

I S M E N E.

A N T I G O N E.

39

I S M E N E.

Antigone,

Do not despise me, I but ask to dye
With thee, and pay due honours to the dead.

A N T I G O N E.

Pretend not to a merit which thou hast not.
Live thou; it is enough for me to perish.

I S M E N E.

But what is life without thee?

A N T I G O N E.

Ask thy friend

And patron there. [pointing to Creon.

I S M E N E.

Why that unkind reproach,
When thou shoud'st rather comfort me?

A N T I G O N E.

Alas!

It gives me pain when I am forc'd to speak
So bitterly against thee.

I S M E N E.

Is there aught

That I can do to save thee?

A N T I G O N E.

Save thyself,

I shall not envy thee.

I S M E N E.

A N T I G O N E.

I S M E N E.

And will you not
Permit me then to share your fate?

A N T I G O N E.

Thy choice
Was life; 'tis mine to dye.

I S M E N E.

I told the oft'
It wou'd be so.

A N T I G O N E.

Thou did'st, and was't not well
Thus to fulfill thy prophecy?

I S M E N E.

The crime
Was mutual, mutual be the punishment.

A N T I G O N E.

Fear not; thy life is safe, but mine long since
Devoted to the dead.

C R E O N.

Both seem depriv'd
Of reason; one indeed was ever thus.

I S M E N E.

O! king, the mind doth seldom keep her seat
When sunk beneath misfortunes,

C R E O N.

A N T I G O N E.

41

C R E O N.

Sunk indeed

Thou wert in wretchedness to join with her.

I S M E N E.

But what is life without Antigone?

C R E O N.

Then think not of it; for she is no more.

I S M E N E.

Wou'd'st thou destroy thy son's long-destin'd wife?

C R E O N.

O! we shall find a fitter bride.

I S M E N E.

Alas!

He will not think so.

C R E O N.

I'll not wed my son

To a base woman.

A N T I G O N E

O! my dearest Hæmon!

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F

And

O! we shall find a fitter bride. The original is *Ἀρῶσιναι γὰρ ἄλλ' ἀρεῶν εἰσὶν ἄλλα*, 'arabilia sunt aliorum arva, which literally translated is 'there are other fields to be till'd.' As this image might be thought a little too gross for modern delicacy I have drop'd it, and only retain'd the sentiment which it was design'd to convey. Rattallerus has soften'd it thus, 'haud saminæ decerent creandis liberis.

O! my dearest Hæmon. Antigone's love of Hæmon heightens the distress of the tragedy, by setting in a stronger light the tyranny of Creon, who thus sacrifices

A N T I G O N E.

And is it thus thy father doth disgrace thee?

C R E O N.

Such an alliance were as hateful to me
As is thyself.

I S M E N E.

Wilt thou then take her from him?

C R E O N.

Their nuptials shall be finished by death.

I S M E N E.

She then must perish?

C R E O N.

So must you and I;
Therefore no more delay; go, take them hence,
Confine them both: henceforth they shall not stir;
When death is near at hand the bravest fly.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Thrice happy they, whose days in pleasure flow,
Who never taste the bitter cup of woe;

For

sees the happiness of his son to his resentment. Antigone becomes likewise a greater object of compassion; in spite of all her courage and resolution, a sigh escapes her for the fate of Hæmon, doom'd to feel such misfortunes from an unnatural father. Her complaint consists but of a line, which a modern writer would have spun out to many a page.

Thrice happy they. &c. This beautiful intermede, or song of the chorus, arises naturally from the preceding circumstances, and laments the ruin of the family of OEdipus. The strophe, on the power and knowledge of Jupiter, is noble and poetical, and gives us a favourable idea of heathen piety and virtue.

For when the wrath of heav'n descends
 On some devoted house, there foul disgrace,
 With grief and all her train attends,
 And shame and sorrow o'erwhelm the wretched race.
 Ev'n as the Thracian sea, when vex'd with storms,
 Whilst darkness hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
 When the bleak North the troubled scene deforms,
 And the black sands in rapid whirlwinds sweep,
 The groaning waves beat on the trembling shore,
 And echoing hills rebellow to the roar.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

O! Labdacus, thy house must perish all;
 Ev'n now I see the stately ruin fall;
 Shame heap'd on shame, and ill on ill,
 Disgrace and never-ending woes;
 Some angry god pursues thee still,
 Nor grants or safety or repose:
 One fair and lovely branch unwither'd stood
 And brav'd th' inclement skies;

F 2

But

O! Labdacus, &c. The genealogy of the unfortunate house of OEdipus runs thus, ' Cadmus, Polydorus, Labdacus, Laius, OEdipus, Eteocles, Poly- nices, Antigone and Ismene.

One fair and lovely branch, &c. The chorus here plainly alludes to the un- fortunate Antigone, whom Pluto, or the infernal gods, obliged to pay funeral rites to her brother Polynices.

But Pluto comes, inexorable god,
 She sinks, she raves, she dyes.

S T R O P H E II.

Shall man below controul the gods above,
 Or human pride restrain the pow'r of Jove,
 Whose eyes by all-subduing sleep
 Are never clos'd as feeble mortals are,
 But still their watchful vigils keep
 Through the large circle of th' eternal year?
 Great lord of all, whom neither time nor age
 With envious stroke can weaken or decay;
 He, who alone the future can preface,
 Who knows alike to-morrow as to day;
 Whilst wretched man is doom'd, by heav'n's decree,
 To toil and pain, to sin and misery.

A N T I S T R O P H E. II.

Oft times the flatt'rer hope, that joy inspires,
 Fills the proud heart of man with fond desires;

He

Whose eyes, &c. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold he that
 "keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm, 121, v. 3, 4.

Th' eternal year. The Greek is *ακαματοι Θεων μηνες*, 'the untired months
 'of the gods,' which conveys a fine image, but would not admit of a literal
 translation.

He, careless trav'ler, wanders still
 Thro' life, unmindful of deccit,
 Nor dreads the danger, till he feel
 The burning sands beneath his feet.

When heav'n impels to guilt the madd'ning mind,
 Then good like ill appears,
 And vice, for universal hate design'd,
 The face of virtue wears,

[Exeunt.

He, careless trav'ler, &c. Sophocles says,

Εἰδοτι δ' ἔθεν, ἔρπει

Πρὶν πυρὶ θερμῶ ποδα τις προσαρη

' Nihil enim scienti contingit,

' Priusquam igni ardenti pedem quis admoverit.'

This beautiful image is, we see, but imperfectly glanced at in the original; I have endeavour'd to express it more fully in the translation. Horace seems to have caught this idea in his

' Incedis per ignes

ε Suppositos cineri doloso.'

HOR.

End of ACT II.

A C T III.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

CREON, HÆMON, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

BEHOLD, O! king, thy youngest hope appear,
The noble Hæmon; lost in grief he seems,
Weeping the fate of poor Antigone.

CREON.

He comes, and better than a prophet, soon
Shall we divine his inmost thoughts: my son,
Com'st thou, well-knowing our decree, to mourn
Thy promis'd bride, and angry to dispute
A father's will; or, whatsoe'er we do
Still to hold best, and pay obedience to us?

HÆMON.

My father, I am thine; do thou command,
And I in all things shall obey; 'tis fit
My promis'd nuptial rites give place to thee.

CREON.

It will become thee with obedience thus
To bear thee ever, and in ev'ry act
To yield submissive to a father's will:
'Tis therefore, O! my son, that men do pray

For children, who with kind officious duty
 May guard their helpless age, resist their foes,
 And, like their parents, love their parent's friend;
 But he, who gets a disobedient child,
 What doth he get but misery and woe?
 His enemies will laugh the wretch to scorn.
 Take heed, my son, thou yield not up thy reason,
 In hopes of pleasure from a worthless woman;
 For cold is the embrace of impious love,
 And deep the wounds of false dissembled friendship;
 Hate then thy bitt'rest foe, despise her arts,
 And leave her to be wedded to the tomb;
 Of all the city her alone I found
 Rebellious; but I have her, nor shall Thebes
 Say I'm a liar; I pronounc'd her fate,
 And she must perish; let her call on Jove
 Who guards the rights of kindred, and the ties
 Of nature; for if those by blood united

Transgress

His enemies &c. The scripture expression which I have here made use of, seems to convey the most exact idea of the original: one cannot read this passage of Sophocles, without recollecting the words of the holy Psalmist;

' Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so are the young children;

' Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Psal. 127, v. 5, 6.

Transgress the laws, I hold myself more near
 Ev'n to a stranger: who in private life
 Is just and good, will to his country too
 Be faithful ever; but the man who proud
 And fierce of soul contemns authority,
 Despiseeth justice, and o'er those who rule
 Wou'd have dominion, such shall never gain
 Th' applauding voice of Creon; he alone,
 Whom the consenting citizens approve,
 Th' acknowledg'd sov'reign, shou'd in all command
 Just or unjust his laws, in things of great
 Or little import, whatsoe'er he bids,
 A subject is not to dispute his will;
 He knows alike to rule and to obey;
 And in the day of battle will maintain
 The foremost rank, his country's best defence.
 Rebellion is the worst of human ills;
 This ruins kingdoms, this destroys the peace

Of

Th' acknowledged sov'reign &c. Sophocles, with the utmost propriety, puts the maxims of arbitrary government into the mouth of a tyrant, whose character he designs to render more odious and detestable to his countrymen, the free citizens of Athens. In the old poet Rotrou, we find the passage before us thus illustrated and adapted to a French theatre;

- ' Sur les desseins des Rois, comme sur ceux des dieux,
- ' Des fidèles sujets doivent fermer les yeux,
- ' Et soumettant leur sens au pouvoir des couronnes,
- ' Quelles que soient les loix, croire qu'elles sont bonnes.

Of noblest families, this wages war,
 And puts the brave to flight; whilst fair obedience
 Keeps all in safety; to preserve it ever
 Shou'd be a king's first care; we will not yield
 To a weak woman; if we must submit,
 At least we will be conquer'd by a man,
 Nor by a female arm thus fall inglorious.

H Æ M O N.

Wisdom, my father, is the noblest gift
 The gods bestow on man, and better far
 Than all his treasures; what thy judgment deems
 Most fit, I cannot, wou'd not reprehend;
 Others perhaps might call it wrong; for me,
 My duty only bids me to inform you
 If aught be done or said that casts reproach
 Or blame on you: such terror wou'd thy looks
 Strike on the low plebeian, that he dare not
 Say aught unpleasing to thee; be it mine
 To tell thee then, what I of late have heard
 In secret whisper'd: your afflicted people

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G

United

Such terror &c. Rotrou has translated, or rather paraphrased this with spirit;

Jamais la verité, cette fille timide,
 Pour entrer chez les rois ne trouve qui la guide,
 Au lieu que le mensonge a mille partisans,
 Et vous est présenté par mille courtisans.

United mourn th' unhappy virgin's fate
 Unmerited, most wretched of her sex,
 To dye for deeds of such distinguish'd virtue,
 For that she wou'd not let a brother lye
 Unburied, to the dogs and birds a prey ;
 Was it not rather, say the murm'ring croud,
 Worthy of golden honours, and fair praise ?
 Such are their dark and secret discontents.
 Thy welfare, and thy happiness alone
 Are all my wish ; what can a child desire
 More than a father's honour, or a father
 More than his child's ? O ! do not then retain
 Thy will, and still believe no sense but thine
 Can judge aright : the man who proudly thinks
 None but himself or eloquent, or wise,
 By time betray'd, is branded for an idiot ;
 True wisdom will be ever glad to learn,
 And not too fond of pow'r ; observe the trees
 That bend to wint'ry torrents, how their boughs
 Unhurt remain, whilst those that brave the storm,

Uprooted

What can a child &c. The filial piety, obedience, and softness of Hæmon, is finely contrasted to the imperious severity, and inexorable cruelty of his father ; we cannot, at the same time, but perceive that his answer to Creon is, considering his circumstances, rather too cold, and sententious, ' la morale (as Brumoy observes) est poussée assez loin, à la manière des Grecs.'

Uprooted torn, shall wither and decay ;
 The pilot, whose unslacken'd sail defies
 Contending winds, with shatter'd bark pursues
 His dang'rous course ; then mitigate thy wrath,
 My father, and give way to sweet repentance.
 If to my youth be aught of judgment giv'n,
 He, who by knowledge and true wisdom's rules
 Guides ev'ry action, is the first of men ;
 But since to few that happiness is giv'n,
 The next is he, who, not too proud to learn,
 Follows the counsels of the wise and good.

C H O R U S.

O! king, if right the youth advise, 'tis fit
 That thou shoud'st listen to him ; so to thee
 Shou'd he attend, as best may profit both.

C R E O N.

And hav'd we liv'd so long then to be taught
 At last our duty by a boy like thee ?

H Æ M O N.

Young tho' I am, I still may judge aright ;
 Wisdom in action lyes, and not in years.

G 2

C R E O N.

Wisdom in action &c. ' Honourable age (says Solomon) is not that which
 standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years ; but
 wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age.'

Book of Wisdom.

A N T I G O N E.

C R E O N.

Call you it wisdom then to honour those
Who disobey the laws?

H Æ M O N.

I wou'd not have thee

Protect the wicked.

C R E O N.

Is she not most guilty?

H Æ M O N.

Thebes doth not think her so.

C R E O N:

Shall Thebes prescribe

To Creon's will?

H Æ M O N.

How weakly dost thou talk!

C R E O N.

Am I king here, or shall another reign?

H Æ M O N.

'Tis not a city, where but one man rules.

C R E O N.

The city is the king's.

H Æ M O N.

Go by thyself then,

And rule henceforth o'er a deserted land.

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

[to the chorus.

He pleads the woman's cause.

H Æ M O N.

If thou art she,

I do; for, O! I speak but for thy sake;

My care is all for thee.

C R E O N.

Abandon'd wretch!

Dispute a father's will!

H Æ M O N.

I see thee err,

And therefore do it.

C R E O N.

Is it then a crime

To guard my throne and rights from violation?

H Æ M O N.

He cannot guard them, who contemns the gods,

And violates their laws.

C R E O N.

O! thou art worse,

More impious ev'n than her thou hast defended.

H Æ M O N.

Nought have I done to merit this reproof.

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Hast thou not pleaded for her?

H Æ M O N.

No; for thee,

And for myself; for the infernal gods.

C R E O N.

But know, she shall not live to be thy wife.

H Æ M O N.

Then she must dye; another too may fall.

C R E O N.

Ha! dost thou threaten me? audacious traitor.

H Æ M O N.

What are my threats? alas! thou heed'st them not.

C R E O N.

That thou shalt see; thy insolent instruction
Shall cost thee dear.

H Æ M O N.

But for thou art my father,

Now

Another too may fall. The Greek is *θανεσ' ελει τινα*. 'whenever she dies
'she will destroy somebody.' The sense, we see, is purposely left ambiguous;
Creon imagines that Hæmon has a design upon his life; it appears afterwards
that he meant his own. This whole scene consists, in the original, of short
speeches of one verse each, containing an equal number of syllables in every
line, which, one would imagine, must have caused a disagreeable monotony
throughout; a circumstance which I have endeavour'd to avoid in the transla-
tion by frequently dividing the blank verse between the two speakers, which
relieves the ear of the reader, and would on the stage give more life and spirit
to the action.

Now wou'd I fay thy senses were impair'd.

C R E O N.

Think not to make me thus thy scorn and laughter,
Thou woman's slave.

H Æ M O N.

Still wou'd'st thou speak thyself,
And never listen to the voice of truth;
Such is thy will.

C R E O N.

Now by Olympus here
I swear, thy vile reproaches shall not pass
Unpunish'd; call her forth: before her bridegroom

[To one of the attendants.]

She shall be brought, and perish in his sight.

H Æ M O N.

These eyes shall never see it: let the slaves
Who fear thy rage submit to it; but know,
'Tis the last time thou shalt behold thy son. [Exit Hæmon.]

S C E N E II.

C R E O N, C H O R U S.

Sudden in anger fled the youth; O! king,
A mind oppress'd like his is desperate.

C R E O N.

Why, let him go; and henceforth better learn

Than

Than to oppose me; be it as it may,
Death is their portion, and he shall not save them.

C H O R U S.

Must they both dye then?

C R E O N.

No; 'tis well advis'd,
If men live; but for Antigone——

C H O R U S.

O! king, what death is she decreed to suffer?

C R E O N.

Far from the haunts of men I'll have her led,
And in a rocky cave, beneath the earth,
Bury'd alive; with her a little food,
Enough to save the city from pollution;
There let her pray the only god she worships
To save her from this death: perhaps he will,
Or if he doth not, let her learn how vain
It is to reverence the pow'rs below.

[Exit Creon.

S C E N E

With her a little food. To destroy any one by famine was look'd on by the Grecians as impious; probably (as is observed by the scholiast on this passage) because it reflected disgrace on any country to suffer its inhabitants to perish by hunger; when they buried persons alive, therefore, it was customary to give them a small quantity of victuals, 'ὅπως μίσμα (says Sophocles) υπερβουγι πόλις,' 'that the city might escape pollution;' a piece of Pagan superstition not unlike our modern jesuitism, calculated, we may observe, with a design to separate crimes from guilt, and give tyrants a power to gratify their resentment with impunity.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Mighty pow'r, all pow'rs above,
 Great unconquerable love!
 Thou, who ly'ft in dimple fleek
 On the tender virgin's cheek,
 Thee the rich and great obey,
 Ev'ry creature owns thy fway.
 O'er the wide earth and o'er the main
 Extends thy univerfal reign;
 All thy madd'ning influence know,
 Gods above, and men below;
 All thy pow'rs refiftlefs prove,
 Great unconquerable love!

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Thou can'ft lead the juft aftray
 From wifdom and from virtue's way;
 The ties of nature ceafe to bind,
 When thou disturb'ft the captive mind.
 Behold, enslav'd by fond defire,
 The youth contemns his aged fire,

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Enamour'd

Mighty pow'r, &c. The ladies will probably be furprifed, and, I doubt not equally pleafed, to meet, in fo antient a writer as Sophocles, with an ode expreffly on the power of love; though they may at the fame time find fault with my author's brevity on a fubject fo extenfive.

Enamour'd of his beauteous maid,
 Nor laws nor parents are obey'd;
 Thus Venus wills it from above,
 And great unconquerable love.

C H O R U S.

Ev'n I, beyond the common bounds of grief,
 Indulge my sorrows, and from these sad eyes
 Fountains of tears will flow, when I behold
 Antigone, unhappy maid, approach
 The bed of death, and hasten to the tomb.

S C E N E IV.

A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

A N T I G O N E.

Farewel, my friends, my countrymen, farewell!
 Here on her last sad journey you behold

The

Farewel, my friends, &c. This lamentation of Antigone, though perhaps more agreeable to the taste of the antients than our own, is extremely beautiful and pathetic; we meet with another of the same kind in the last act of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, by Euripides. Such, we may imagine, was the lamentation of the daughter of Jephtha, when she went with her companions and bewail'd her virginity upon the mountains, as it is relate in the 12th chapter of the book of Judges. Brumoy judiciously observes on this passage, that the grief here express'd by Antigone is not in the least inconsistent with her character; as to meet death with insensibility is rather brutality than heroism. At the same time that Antigone makes the sacrifice of life, she seems conscious of its value: her complaints are the last sighs of nature, which, so far from diminishing true greatness of mind, serve but to give it a more distinguish'd lustre. The speeches of Antigone (in the original) are in strophe and antistrophe, but as they are interrupted by the replies of the chorus, would, I thought, have appear'd awkward in ode or rhyme; I have therefore preserved the blank verse.

The poor Antigone; for never more
 Shall I return, or view the light of day:
 The hand of death conducts me to the shore
 Of dreary Acheron; no nuptial song
 Reserv'd for me, the wretched bride alone
 Of Pluto now, and wedded to the tomb.

C H O R U S.

Be it thy glory still, that by the sword
 Thou fall'st not, nor the slow-consuming hand
 Of foul distemp'ature, but far distinguish'd
 Above thy sex, and to thyself a law,
 Doom'st thy own death, so shall thy honour live,
 And future ages venerate thy name.

A N T I G O N E.

Thus Tantalus' unhappy daughter fell,
 The Phrygian Niobe; high on the top
 Of tow'ring Sipylus the rock enfolds her,
 Ev'n as the ivy twines her tendrils round
 The lofty oak, there still (as fame reports)
 To melting show'rs, and everlasting snow
 Obvious she stands, her beauteous bosom wet
 With tears, that from her ever-streaming eyes

H 2

Incessant

The Phrygian Niobe. The story of Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, changed into a rock, is too well known to need any explanation.

See Ovid's *Meta.* b. 6.

Inceffant flow; her fate refembles mine.

C H O R U S.

A goddeſs ſhe, and from a goddeſs ſprung;
We are but mortal, and of mortals born:
To meet the fate of gods thus in thy life,
And in thy death, O! 'tis a glorious doom.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! thou mock'ſt me! why, whiſt yet I live,
Wou'd'ſt thou afflict me with reproach like this?
O! my dear country, and my dearer friends
Its bleſt inhabitants, renowned Thebes!
And ye Dircaean fountains, you I call
To witneſs, that I dye by laws unjuſt,
To my deep priſon unlamented go,
To my ſad tomb, no fellow-ſuff'rer there
To ſooth my woes, the living, or the dead.

C H O R U S.

Raſhneſs like thine muſt meet with ſuch reward;
A father's crimes, I fear, lye heavy on thee.

A N T I G O N E.

Oh! thou haſt touch'd my worſt of miſeries!
My father's fate, the woes of all our houſe,
The wretched race of Labdacus, renown'd
For it's miſfortunes! O! the guilty bed

Of those from whom I sprang; unhappy offspring
 Of parents most unhappy! lo! to them
 I go accurs'd; a virgin and a slave.
 O! my poor brother! most unfortunate
 Were thy sad nuptials; they have slain thy sister.

C H O R U S.

Thy piety demands our praise; but know,
 Authority is not to be despised;
 'Twas thy own rashness brought destruction on thee.

A N T I G O N E.

Thus friendless, unlamented, must I tread
 The destin'd path, no longer to behold
 Yon sacred light, and none shall mourn my fate.

S C E N E V.

C R E O N, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

C R E O N.

Know ye not, slaves like her to death devoted
 Wou'd never cease their wailings? wherefore is it
 You thus delay to execute my orders?
 Let her be carry'd instant to the cave,
 And leave her there alone, to live, or dye;

Her

Thy sad nuptials. Polynices married the daughter of Adrastus, who, in defence of his son-in-law, led his Argians against Thebes: thus his marriage was the cause of his death, and the decree against Antigone consequent upon it.

Her blood rests not on us: but she no longer
Shall breathe on earth.

[Exit Creon.

S C E N E VI.

A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

A N T I G O N E.

O! dreadful marriage-bed!

O! my deep dungeon! my eternal home,
Whither I go to join my kindred dead!
For not a few hath fell Persephone
Already ta'en; to her I go, the last
And most unhappy, e'er my time was come;
But still I have sweet hope I shall not go
Unwelcome to my father, nor to thee,
My mother; dear to thee, Eteocles,
Still shall I ever be; these pious hands
Wash'd your pale bodies, and adorn'd you both
With rites sepulchral, and libations due:
And thus, my Polynices, for my care
Of thee am I rewarded, and the good
Alone shall praise me: for a husband dead,
Nor, had I been a mother, for my children
Wou'd I have dared to violate the laws:
Another husband and another child

Night

Might sooth affliction ; but, my parents dead,
 A brother's loss cou'd never be repair'd,
 And therefore did I dare the vent'rous deed,
 And therefore dye by Creon's dread command.
 Ne'er shall I taste of Hymen's joys, or know
 A mother's pleasures in her infant race ;
 But friendless and forlorn alive descend
 Into the dreary mansions of the dead :
 And how have I offended the just gods !
 But wherefore call on them ! will they protect me,
 When thus I meet with the reward of ill

For

A brother's loss &c. Sophocles visibly alludes in this passage to the following story told by Herodotus in his *Thalia*.

Darius suspecting that Intaphernes and his relations might raise a rebellion against him, caused him to be seized with his children and family ; whilst they were under confinement, and bound in order to execution, the wife of Intaphernes went to the gates of the palace, weeping and lamenting loudly, which she continued so assiduously, that at last Darius, moved with compassion, sent a messenger to speak to her in these terms, " Woman, the king gives you the life of any one among your relations who are prisoners, and leaves you the choice of the person. Since the king, said she, after some deliberation, will grant me no more than one, I chuse my brother." Darius, when he heard her answer, wondering at her choice, dispatch'd another messenger, to ask her, in his name, " why she had shewn so little regard to her husband and children, and rather chose to save the life of her brother, who was not so near related to her as her children, nor could be so dear to her as her husband ?" She answer'd, " that by the permission of God, she might have another husband, and other children, if she should be deprived of those she had ; but could never have another brother, because her father and mother were already dead." The king was so well-pleas'd with this answer, that he not only pardon'd her brother, but gave her likewise the life of her eldest son, and put all the rest to death.

See Littlebury's Herodotus, v. i. p. 318.

For doing good? if this be just, ye gods,
 If I am guilty let me suffer for it;
 But if the crime be theirs, O! let them feel
 That weight of mis'ry they have laid on me.

C H O R U S.

The storm continues, and her angry soul
 Still pours its sorrows forth.

S C E N E VII.

C R E O N, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S

C R E O N.

The slaves shall suffice

For this delay.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! death cannot be

Far from that voice.

C R E O N.

I wou'd not have thee hope

A moment's respite.

A N T I G O N E.

O! my country's gods!

And thou, my native Thebes, I leave you now,

Look on me, princes, see the last of all

My royal race, see what I suffer, see

From

From whom I bear it, from the worst of men,
Only because I did delight in virtue.

[Exit Creon.

S C E N E VIII.
A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.
C H O R U S.
S T R O P H E I.

Remember what fair Danae endur'd,
Condemn'd to change heav'ns chearful light
For scenes of horror and of night,
Within a brazen tow'r long time immur'd;
Yet was the maid of noblest race,
And honour'd ev'n with Jove's embrace;
But O! when fate decrees a mortal's woe,
Nought can reverse the doom, or stop the blow,
Nor heav'n above, nor earth and seas below.

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I

A N T I S-

Remember what, &c. The chorus, as dependants on Creon, could neither defend nor assist Antigone, they can only lament those misfortunes which it was not in their power to remove; they endeavour therefore to assuage her grief by the mention of other illustrious persons, whom they compare with her, not in their guilt but in their sufferings.

Fair Danae. Acrisius, king of the Argives, having been warn'd by an oracle, that he should be slain by his grandson, shut up his daughter Danae in a brazen tower; Jupiter, however, according to the poets, gain'd access to her by transforming himself into a golden shower. Horace has apply'd this fiction with his usual elegance.

See book 3, od. 16.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

The Thracian monarch, Dryas' hapless son,
 Chain'd to a rock in torment lay,
 And breath'd his angry soul away,
 By wrath misguided, and by pride undone;
 Taught by th' offended god to know
 From foul reproach what evils flow;
 For he the rites prophan'd with fland'rous tongue,
 The holy flame he quench'd, disturb'd the song,
 And wak'd to wrath the muses' tuneful throng.

S T R O P H E II.

His turbid waves where Salmydeffus roll'd,
 And proud Cyanea's rocks divide the flood,
 There from thy temple, Mars, did'st thou behold
 The sons of Phineus welt'ring in their blood;

A

The Thracian monarch. Lycurgus, king of Thrace, for contemning, or disturbing the rites of Bacchus was, according to Sophocles, chain'd to a rock, where he perish'd. Homer punishes him with blindness. See the Iliad, b, 7. Some are of opinion that the fable took its rise from this monarch's virtuous regard for his people, who seeing the ill effects of their intemperance in the use of wine, caused all the vines in his country to be rooted up and destroy'd. Brumoy, by mistake, calls this Thracian monarch Orpheus, though he is both here and in Homer specified as the son of Dryas, and consequently can be no other than the Lycurgus abovemention'd.

Salmydeffus, &c. Salmydeffus was a river in Thrace, near which was a temple dedicated to Mars. The Cyaneæ were two rocks, or small islands near the Thracian Bosphorus.

The sons of Phineus. Plexippus and Pandion, whose eyes were put out by their step-mother Idæa, the wife of Phineus, after the death of their own mother Cleopatra, the daughter of Boreas and Orithyia, whose fate is alluded to in the latter part of the ode.

A mother did the cruel deed,
 A mother bad her children bleed;
 Both, by her impious hand, depriv'd of light,
 In vain lamented long their ravish'd fight,
 And clos'd their eyes in never-ending night.

A N T I S T R O P H E. II.

Long time they wept a better mother's fate,
 Unhappy offspring of a luckless bed!
 Yet nobly born, and eminently great
 Was she, and mid'ft sequefter'd caverns bred;
 Her father's angry storms among,
 Daughter of gods, from Boreas sprung;
 Equal in swiftness to the bounding steed,
 She skim'd the mountains with a courser's speed,
 Yet was the nymph to death and misery decreed.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T III.

A N T I G O N E.

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

TIRESIAS, GUIDE, CREON, CHORUS.

TIRESIAS.

PRINCES of Thebes, behold, conducted hither
 By my kind guide, (such is the blind-man's fate)
 Tiresias comes.

CREON.

O! venerable prophet,
 What hast thou to impart?

TIRESIAS.

I will inform thee;
 Observe, and be obedient.

CREON.

Princes of Thebes. The name *Ανακτες*, or princes, among the Greeks, was given not only to sovereigns, but frequently to the principal and most honourable members of the common wealth: Tiresias, we see, compliments the ancient citizens of Thebes, who composed the chorus, with this title.

Observe, and be obedient. The prophet Tiresias is here introduced with great propriety; his appearance has something in it very solemn and affecting, his age and blindness adding a kind of melancholy dignity to the scene: the tyrant himself, we see, pays, at first, the utmost deference to his authority, and trembles at his power, though he afterwards treats him with contempt, and even accuses him of being corrupted by the friends of Antigone. This conduct of the poet is artful, as it raises the character of the prophet, and heightens his consequence, at the same time that it aggravates the guilt of Creon, by representing him as a contemner of the gods, and renders him a fitter object of divine vengeance.

C R E O N.

Have I not
Been ever so?

T I R E S I A S.

Thou hast; and therefore Thebes
Hath flourish'd still——

C R E O N.

By thy protecting hand.

T I R E S I A S.

Therefore be wise; for know, this very hour
Is the important crisis of thy fate.

C R E O N.

Speak then, what is it? how I dread thy words!

T I R E S I A S.

When thou hast heard the portents which my art
But now discover'd, thou wilt see it all.
Know then, that sitting on my antient throne
Augurial, whence each divination comes,
Sudden a strange unusual noise was heard
Of birds; whose loud and barb'rous dissonance

I

Of Birds, &c. Divination by birds was in great esteem among the antients; the augurs were clothed in white, with a crown of gold upon their heads, and seated on a kind of throne, from whence, as the scholiast informs us, they had power to assemble the birds from all quarters, whenever they had occasion for them. Tiresias does not tell us what birds they were that he heard fighting in the air, most probably vulturs, as they feed only on carcases; these, and other birds of prey, were always supposed to foretell blood and slaughter.

I knew not how t' interpret; by the sound
 Of clashing wings, I cou'd discover well
 That with their bloody claws they tore each other;
 Amaz'd and fearful, instantly I try'd
 On burning altars holy sacrifice;
 When, from the victim, lo! the sullen flame
 Aspir'd not; smother'd in the ashes still
 Lay'd the moist flesh, and, roll'd in smoke, repell'd
 The rising fire, whilst from their fat the thighs
 Were sep'rate; all these signs of deadly omen,
 Boding dark vengeance, did I learn from him; [pointing to
 He is my leader, king, and I am thine. the guide.]
 Then mark me well; from thee these evils flow,
 From thy unjust decree; our altars all
 Have been polluted by th' unhallow'd food
 Of birds and dogs, that prey'd upon the corse
 Of wretched OEdipus' unhappy son;
 Nor will the gods accept our offer'd pray'rs,

Or

From the victim &c. Tiresias, alarm'd at the fighting of the birds, proceeds to the *πυρομαντεία*, or divination by fire of the sacrifice, which terrifies him with fresh omens; for, when the fire was kindled with difficulty, when the flame was divided, when it did not immediately spread itself over all the parts of the victim, but consumed them by degrees; when instead of ascending in a straight line, it whirl'd round, or was extinguish'd; when it cast forth a thick black smoke; when the *μηρια*, or thighs of the victim, parts appropriated more particularly to the gods, were not cover'd with fat, in order to consume them more quickly; all these were consider'd as marks of the divine displeasure, and inauspicious portents of future misery.

Or from our hands receive the sacrifice ;
 No longer will the birds send forth their sounds
 Auspicious, fatten'd thus with human blood.
 Consider this, my son ; and, O ! remember,
 To err is human ; 'tis the common lot
 Of frail mortality ; and he alone
 Is wise and happy, who when ills are done
 Persists not, but wou'd heal the wound he made ;
 But self-sufficient obstinacy ever
 Is folly's utmost height : where is the glory
 To slay the slain, or persecute the dead ?
 I wish thee well, and therefore have spoke thus ;
 When those, who love, advise, 'tis sweet to learn.

C R E O N.

I know, old man, I am the gen'ral mark,
 The butt of all, and you all aim at me :
 For me I know your prophecies were made,
 And I am fold to this detested race ;
 Betray'd to them : but make your gains ; go, purchase
 Your Sardinian amber, and your Indian gold ;
 They shall not buy a tomb for Polynices :

No,

Your Sardinian amber. Sardis was a principal city of Lydia, near the river Pactolus, celebrated in the fables of antiquity for what it never had, sands of gold ; Sophocles calls it *ηλεκτρον*, or amber, probably on account of it's transparency.

No, shou'd the eagle seek him for his food,
 And tow'ring bear him to the throne of Jove,
 I wou'd not bury him; for well I know,
 The gods by mortals cannot be polluted;
 But the best men, by fordid gain corrupt,
 Say all that's ill, and fall beneath the lowest.

T I R E S I A S.

Who knows this, or who dare accuse us of it?

C R E O N.

What mean'st thou by that question? ask'st thou who?

T I R E S I A S.

How far is wisdom beyond ev'ry good!

C R E O N.

As far as folly beyond ev'ry ill.

T I R E S I A S.

That's a distemper thou'rt afflicted with.

C R E O N.

I'll not revile a prophet.

T I R E S I A S.

But thou dost;

Thou'llt not believe me.

C R E O N.

Your prophetic race

Are lovers all of gold.

T I R E S I A S.

T I R E S I A S.

Tyrants are so,

Howe'er ill-gotten.

C R E O N.

Know'st thou 'tis a king

Thou'rt talking thus to?

T I R E S I A S.

Yes, I know it well;

A king, who owes to me his country's safety.

C R E O N.

Thou'rt a wife prophet, but thou art unjust.

T I R E S I A S.

Thou wilt oblige me then to utter that

Which I had purpos'd to conceal.

C R E O N.

Speak out,

Say what thou wilt, but say it not for hire.

T I R E S I A S.

Thus may it seem to thee.

C R E O N.

But know, old man,

I am not to be fold.

T I R E S I A S.

Remember this:

K

Not

Not many days shall the bright sun perform
 His stated course, e'er sprung from thy own loins
 Thyself shall yield a victim, in thy turn
 Thou too shalt weep, for that thy cruel sentence
 Decreed a guiltless virgin to the tomb,
 And kept on earth, unmindful of the gods,
 Ungraced, unburied, an unhallow'd corse,
 Which not to thee, nor to the gods above
 Of right belong'd; 'twas arbitrary pow'r:
 But the avenging furies lye conceal'd,
 The ministers of death have spread the snare,
 And with like woes await to punish thee;
 Do I say this from hopes of promis'd gold?
 Pass but a little time, and thou shalt hear
 The shrieks of men, the women's loud laments
 O'er all thy palace; see th' offended people
 Together rage; thy cities all by dogs
 And beasts and birds polluted, and the stench
 Of filth obscene on ev'ry altar laid.
 Thus from my angry soul have I sent forth
 It's keenest arrows (for thou hast provok'd me)

Nor

Nor to the gods above &c. The heathen deities were divided into the superi, and the inferi, the gods above, and the gods below; to the latter of these the *Οὐρανὸν ὑπερταροῖ*, or, infernal powers, belonged the care of the dead, whom Creon had offended by refusing burial to the corpse of Polynices.

Nor shall they fly in vain, or thou escape
 The destin'd blow: now, boy, conduct me home;
 On younger heads the tempest of his rage
 Shall fall; but, henceforth let him learn to speak
 In humbler terms, and bear a better mind.

[Exit Tiresias.

S C E N E II.

C R E O N, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

He's gone, and dreadful were his prophecies;
 Since these grey hairs were o'er my temples spread,
 Nought from those lips hath flow'd but sacred truth.

C R E O N.

I know there hath not, and am troubled much
 For the event: 'tis grating to submit,
 And yet the mind spite of itself must yield
 In such distress.

C H O R U S.

Son of Menæceus, now
 Thou need'st good counsel.

C R E O N.

What woud'st thou advise?

I will obey thee.

K 2

C H O R U S.

A N T I G O N E.

C H O R U S.

Set the virgin free,
And let a tomb be rais'd for Polynices.

C R E O N.

And dost thou counsel thus? and must I yield?

C H O R U S.

Immediately, O! king, for vengeance falls
With hasty footsteps on the guilty head.

C R E O N.

I cannot; yet I must reverse the sentence;
There is no struggling with necessity.

C H O R U S.

Do it thyself, nor trust another hand.

C R E O N.

I will; and you my servants, be prepar'd;
Each with his axe quick hasten to the place;
Myself, (for thus I have resolv'd) will go,
And the same hand that bound shall set her free;
For, O! I fear 'tis wisest still thro' life
To keep our antient laws, and follow virtue.

S C E N E

The same hand &c. Creon, whose cruel nature was proof even against the remonstrances of paternal affection, is intimidated by the heavy judgments denounced against him by the prophet; he goes out with a design to prevent the execution of his sentence against Antigone; this produces a new situation in the drama, and leaves the audience in suspense concerning the catastrophe.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Bacchus, by various names to mortals known,
 Fair Semele's illustrious son,
 Offspring of thunder-bearing Jove,
 Who honour'st fam'd Italia with thy love!
 Who dwell'st where erst the dragon's teeth were strow'd,
 Or where Ismenus pours his gentle flood;
 Who dost o'er Ceres' hallow'd rites preside,
 And at thy native Thebes propitious still reside.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Where fam'd Parnassus' forked hills uprise,
 To thee ascends the sacrifice;

Corycia's

Bacchus, by various names, &c. This chorus may be consider'd as an image of the antient Greek tragedy, which in its first rude state was no more than what we here meet with, a hymn to Bacchus. The old men, affrighted at the predictions of Tiresias denouncing misery to Thebes, address themselves to that god as their tutelary deity: the whole ode is in the original to the last degree beautiful, and written with the true spirit and genius of antiquity.

Fair Semele's illustrious son, &c. Bacchus was generally reputed a Theban, and supposed by the poets to be the son of Jupiter, by Semele the daughter of Cadmus; he had several names as Lyæus, Euius, Lenæus, Bromius, Eleleus, and many others. Italy is mention'd as his favourite country, on account of the number of vines growing there. He was worship'd together with Ceres in the Eleusinian mysteries.

Corycia's nymphs attend below,
 Whilst from Castalia's fount fresh waters flow:
 O'er Nyfa's mountains wreathes of ivy twine,
 And mix their tendrils with the clust'ring vine:
 Around their master croud the virgin throng,
 And praise the god of Thebes in never-dying song.

S T R O P H E II.

Happiest of cities, Thebes! above the rest
 By Semele and Bacchus blest!
 O! visit now thy once belov'd abode,
 O! heal our woes, thou kind protecting god!
 From steep Parnassus, or th' Eubæan sea,
 With smiles auspicious come, and bring with thee
 Health, joy and peace, and fair prosperity.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Immortal leader of the madd'ning choir,
 Whose torches blaze with unextinguish'd fire,
 Great son of Jove, who guid'ft the tuneful throng,
 Thou, who presidest o'er the nightly song,

Come

Corycia's nymphs. The muses, so call'd from Corycium at the foot of mount Parnassus.

Nyfa's mountains. Parnassus is described by the poets as having two tops, one call'd Cithra, sacred to Apollo, the other Nyfa, sacred to Bacchus: there was also a city in Arcadia of this name, where Bacchus was nursed.

Come with thy Naxian maids, a festive train,
Who wild with joy, and raging o'er the plain,
For thee the dance prepare, to thee devote the strain.

[Exeunt.

Naxian maids. Naxos was one of the Cyclades, islands in the Archipelago, famous for its vines : of the nymphs of Naxos, call'd Thyades, or Mænades, it is reported that they ran wild and frantic about the woods, with each a torch or thyrsus in her hand, singing the praises of Bacchus ; Sophocles calls them therefore *μαινομεναι προσπολοι*, ' the madd'ning choir.

End of ACT IV.

ACT V.

A N T I G O N E.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS

MESSENGER.

YE race of Cadmus, sons of antient Thebes,
 Henceforth no state of human life by me
 Shall be or valu'd or despis'd; for all
 Depends on fortune; she exalts the low,
 And casts the mighty down; the fate of men
 Can never be foretold: there was a time
 When Creon liv'd in envy'd happiness,
 Rul'd o'er renowned Thebes, which from her foes
 He had deliver'd, with successful pow'r;
 Blest in his kingdom, in his children blest,
 He stretch'd o'er all his universal sway;
 Now all is gone: when pleasure is no more,
 Man is but as an animated corse,
 Nor can be said to live; he may be rich,
 Or deck'd with regal honours; but if joy

Be

When pleasure is no more, &c. Athenæus will needs have it that on this sentiment in Sophocles was founded the famous system of Epicurus, which places the summum bonum, or chief good, in the enjoyment of pleasure; but as he gives us no authority in support of this opinion, we are not obliged to subscribe to it.

Be absent from him, if he tastes them not,
'Tis uselefs grandeur all, and empty shade.

C H O R U S.

Touching our royal master bring'st thou news
Of sorrow to us?

M E S S E N G E R.

They are dead; and those,
Who live, the dreadful cause.

C H O R U S.

Quick, tell us who,
The slayer and the slain?

M E S S E N G E R.

Hæmon is dead.

C H O R U S.

Dead! by what hand, his father's or his own?

VOL. II.

L

MES-

They are dead The most correct ancient tragic writers, probably the better to preserve the unities, generally throw the principal circumstances of the catastrophe into narration; the moderns, for reasons sufficiently obvious, bring the whole into action; much may be said in defence of the methods used by both. Leaving this question therefore to be determined by the critics, I shall only add, that in regard to the denouement of the Antigone, nothing can be more simple, or natural; the consequence of Creon's cruelty, and his too late repentance, brings on the death of Antigone, Hæmon, and Eurydice. Poetical justice is strictly observed; the unfortunate Creon suffers as a king, as a husband, and as a father; and in spite of all his crimes becomes an object of compassion. Thus terror and pity are both effectually rais'd, the one by his exemplary punishment, and the other by his unparallel'd misfortunes.

M E S S E N G E R.

Enrag'd and grieving for his murther'd love
He flew himself.

C H O R U S.

O! prophet, thy predictions
Were but too true!

M E S S E N G E R.

Since thus it be, 'tis fit
We should consult; our present state demands it.

C H O R U S.

But see, Eurydice the wretched wife
Of Creon comes this way; or chance hath brought her,
Or Hæmon's hapless fate hath reach'd her ear.

S C E N E II.

E U R Y D I C E, M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

E U R Y D I C E.

O! citizens, as to Minerva's fane
Ev'n now I went to pay my vows, the doors

I burst,

O! citizens, &c. As the queen is going out to the temple of Minerva, she opens the door, and overhears the messenger relating to the chorus the death of Hæmon; she faints at the news, and as soon as recover'd enters with impatience to know the truth of it. Sophocles never brings his characters on the stage without some preparation and a reason for their appearance there; a conduct, which I would recommend to our modern dramatic writers for their imitation.

I burst, and heard imperfectly the sound
Of most disastrous news which touch'd me near.
Breathless I fell amidst the virgin throng,
And now I come to know the dreadful truth;
Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now; for O!
I am no stranger to calamity.

M E S S E N G E R.

Then mark, my mistress, I will tell thee all,
Nor will I pass a circumstance unmention'd.
Should I deceive thee with an idle tale
T'were soon discover'd; truth is always best.
Know then, I follow'd Creon to the field,
Where torn by dogs the wretched carcase lay
Of Polynices, (first to Proserpine
And angry Pluto, to appease their wrath,
Our humble pray'rs addressing) there we lav'd
In the pure stream the body, then with leaves
Fresh gather'd cov'ring burnt his poor remains,
And on the neighb'ring turf a tomb uprais'd;
Then tow'rs the virgin's rocky cave advanc'd,
When from the dreadful chamber a sad cry
As from afar was heard, a servant ran
To tell the king, and still as we approach'd,

The found of sorrow from a voice unknown
And undistinguish'd issued forth. Alas!
Said Creon, am I then a faithful prophet?
And do I tread a more unhappy path
Than e'er I went before? It is my son,
I know his voice: but get ye to the door,
My servants, close, look thro' the stony heap,
Mark if it be so; is it Hæmon's voice,
Again he cry'd, or have the gods deceiv'd me?
Thus spoke the king: we, to our mournful lord
Obedient, look'd, and saw Antigone
Down in the deepest hollow of the cave
By her own vestments hung; close by her side
The wretched youth embracing in his arms
Her lifeless corse, weeping his father's crime,
His ravish'd bride, and horrid nuptial bed.
Creon beheld, and loud approaching cry'd,
What art thou doing? what's thy dreadful purpose?
What means my son? come forth, my Hæmon, come,
Thy father begs thee; with indignant eye
The youth look'd up, nor scornful deign'd an answer,
But silent drew his sword, and with fell rage
Struck at his father, who by flight escap'd
The blow, then on himself bent all his wrath,

Full in his side the weapon fix'd, but still,
 Whilst life remain'd, on the soft bosom hung
 Of the dear maid, and his last spirit breath'd
 O'er her pale cheek, discolour'd with his blood.
 Thus lay the wretched pair in death united,
 And celebrate their nuptials in the tomb,
 To future times a terrible example
 Of the sad woes which rashness ever brings.

[Exit Eurydice.

S C E N E III.

M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

What can this mean? she's gone, without a word.

M E S S E N G E R.

'Tis strange, and yet I trust she will not loud
 Proclaim her griefs to all, but, for I know

She's

Whilst life remain'd, &c. The death of the two lovers is finely described and the circumstances of it remarkably natural and affecting. I doubt whether Otway himself, with all his tenderness, could have drawn a more striking picture.

She's gone, &c. The silence and departure of Eurydice, on hearing the news of her son's death, are extremely judicious, and more expressive of her feelings on the occasion than words could possibly have made it "cura leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent. When Oedipus is discover'd to be the murderer of his father, Jocasta acts in the same manner. A modern writer would perhaps have lengthen'd out this scene with complaints and declamation; but Sophocles (to speak in the language of Shakespear) never o'ersteps the modesty of nature, his faithful mirror reflects all her features without magnifying, diminishing, or distorting them.

She's ever prudent, with her virgin train
In secret weep her murder'd Hæmon's fate.

C H O R U S.

Clamour indeed were vain; but such deep silence
Doth ever threaten horrid consequence.

M E S S E N G E R.

Within we soon shall know if aught she hide
Of deadly purport in her angry fowl;
For well thou say'st her silence is most dreadful.

[Exit Messenger.]

C H O R U S.

But lo! the king himself, and in his arms
See his dead son, the monument accurs'd
Of his sad fate, which, may we say unblamed,
Sprang not from others guilt but from his own.

S C E N E IV.

C R E O N, M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

[Creon enters bearing the body of Hæmon]

C R E O N.

Ah me! what deadly woes from the bad mind

Perpetual

In his arms, &c. It is plain from these words, which are literally translated from the original, that Creon enters bearing the body of his dead son. Sophocles, we may imagine, thought it would heighten the distress. Shakespear was of the same opinion, and brings in Lear with Cordelia in his arms; though in Tate's alteration of it, which is always ridiculously follow'd in the representation, this circumstance is omitted.

Perpetual flow; thus in one wretched house
 Have you beheld the slayer and the slain!
 O fatal counsels! O unhappy son!
 Thus with thy youthful bride to sink in death;
 Thou dy'st, my child, and I alone have kill'd thee:

C H O R U S.

O king, thy justice comes too late.

C R E O N.

It doth,

I know it well, unhappy as I am;
 For O! the god this heavy weight of woe
 Hath cast upon me, and his fiercest wrath
 Torments me now, changing my joyful state
 To keenest anguish; O! the fruitless toils
 Of wretched mortals!

S C E N E V.

M E S S E N G E R, C R E O N, C H O R U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

Thus oppress'd, my lord,
 With bitterest misfortune, more affliction
 Awaits thee still, which thou wilt find within.

C R E O N.

And can there be more woes? is aught to come
 More horrible than this?

M E S-

M E S S E N G E R.

The queen is dead;
Her wounds yet fresh, eager alas! to shew
A mother's love, she follow'd her lost child.

C R E O N.

O death insatiate! how dost thou afflict me!
What cruel news, thou messenger of ill,
Hast thou brought now?

C H O R U S.

A wretch, already dead
With grief, thy horrid tale once more hath slain.

C R E O N.

Didst thou not say a fresh calamity
Had fall'n upon me? didst not say my wife
Was dead, alas! for grief of Hæmon's fate?

[Scene opens and discovers the body of Eurydice.]

M E S S E N G E R.

Behold her there.

C R E O N.

O me! another blow!
What now remains? what can I suffer more,
Thus bearing in these arms my breathless son?
My wife too dead! O! most unhappy mother.
And O! thou wretched child!

M E S S E N C E R.

Cloſe by the altar

She drew the ſword, and cloſ'd her eyes in death,
Lamenting firſt her loſt Megareus' fate
And Hæmon's death, with imprecations dire
Still pour'd on thee, the murth'rer of thy ſon;

C R E O N.

I ſhudder at it: will no friendly hand
Deſtroy me quick? for O! I am moſt wretched;
Beſet with miſ'ries!

M E S S E N G E R.

She accus'd thee oft,
And ſaid the guilt of both their deaths was thine.

C R E O N.

Alas! I only am to blame; 'twas I
Who kill'd thee, Hæmon; I confeſs my crime;
Bear me, my ſervants, bear me far from hence
For I am — nothing.

C H O R U S.

If in ills like theſe
Aught can be well, thou haſt determin'd right;
When leaſt we ſee our woes, we feel them leaſt.

M

C R E O N.

Megareus' fate. Megareus was the firſt husband of Eurydice.

A N T I G O N E.

C R E O N.

Quick let my last, my happiest hour appear;
 Wou'd it were come, the period of my woes!
 O! that I might not see another day!

C H O R U S.

Time must determine that: the present hour
 Demands our care; the rest be left to heav'n.

C R E O N.

But I have wish'd and pray'd for't.

C H O R U S.

Pray for nothing;
 There's no reversing the decrees of fate.

C R E O N.

Take hence this useless load, this guilty wretch
 Who slew his child, who slew e'en thee, my wife;
 I know not whither to betake me, where
 To turn my eyes, for all is dreadful round me;
 And fate hath weigh'd me down on every side.

C H O R U S.

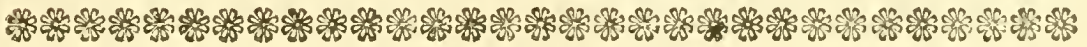
Wisdom alone is man's true happiness;
 We are not to dispute the will of heav'n;
 For ever are the boastings of the proud

By the just Gods repay'd, and man at last
Is taught to fear their anger, and be wise.

And man &c. This moral reflection, naturally arising from the action of the drama, concludes the tragedy of Antigone; a piece, which for the conduct of its plot, the justness of its characters, and the propriety of its sentiments and expressions cannot be too much admired. That simplicity, and want of incidents, which modern critics may condemn, were probably among those beauties which recommended it to the favour of antiquity: it met with remarkable success on the Athenian stage, having been represented there (according to Aristophanes the grammarian) two and thirty times, and was look'd on as so considerable a testimony of the author's merit, as to procure for him in reward the government of Samos.



TRACHINIÆ.



Dramatis Personæ.

HERCULES.

HYLLUS, his Son.

DEIANIRA, wife of HERCULES.

LICHAS, a Herald.

ATTENDANT on DEIANIRA.

NURSE.

OLD MAN.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS,

Composed of VIRGINS of Trachis.

SCENE before the palace of CEYX in Trachis.

T R A C H I N I Æ.

A C T I.

S C E N E . I.

DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT.

DEIANIRA.

O F antient fame, and long for truth receiv'd,
Hath been the maxim, that nor good nor ill
Can mortal life be call'd before we dye;
Alas! it is not so; for, O! my friends,

E'er

Trachiniæ. The titles of the antient tragedies were usually given them either from the persons concern'd, the business of the drama, or the place where it was transacted: the Trachiniæ is so call'd from Trachis, a small country of Phthiotis in Thessaly: to this place, Deianira had accompanied Hercules in his voluntary banishment, and remain'd under the protection of Ceyx the king, during the absence of her husband on his expedition to OEchalia.

Nor good, nor ill, &c. This observation is generally attributed to Solon, who lived long after Deianira; Sophocles is therefore here accused of an anachronism; but as the remark is no less obvious than true, we need not be surpris'd to find it quoted as proverbial, even in the earliest ages.

E'er to the shades of Orcus I descend,
 'Too well I know that Deianira's life
 Hath ever been, and ever must be wretched:
 Whilst in my native Pleuron, Æneus watch'd
 My tender years with kind paternal care,
 If ever woman suffer'd from the dread
 Of hated nuptials, I endur'd the worst
 And bitt'rest woes, when Achelous came,
 The river-god, to ask a father's voice
 And snatch me to his arms; with triple form
 He came affrighting; now, to fight appear'd
 A bull, and now with motley scales adorn'd
 A wreathed serpent, now with human shape
 And bestial head united; from his beard,
 Shadow'd with hair, as from a fountain, drip'd
 The ever-flowing water; horrid form!
 This to escape, my pray'rs incessant rose,
 That I might rather dye than e'er approach

His

Pleuron. A city of Ætolia, and the residence of Æneus, king of that country, and father of Deianira.

Achelous. A famous river, arising out of mount Pindus, and dividing Ætolia from Acarnania; the fabulous account of his person and power, is received by the ancient poets, and explain'd by the mythologists; for a full detail of this extraordinary courtship, the reader may turn to the instructive Ovid. See met. b. 9.

His hated bed, when, lo! the welcome hour,
 Tho' late, arriv'd, that brought the son of Jove
 And fair Alcmena to my aid; he came,
 He fought, he free'd me; how the battle pass'd
 Who unconcern'd beheld it best can tell;
 Alas! I saw it not, oppress'd with fear,
 Left from my fatal beauty shou'd arise
 Some sad event; at length, deciding Jove
 Gave to the doubtful fight a happy end,
 If I may call it so; for, since the hour
 That gave me to Alcides' wish'd-for bed,
 Fears rise on fears; still is my anxious heart
 Solicitous for him; oft-times the night,
 Which brings him to me, bears him from my arms
 To other labours, and a second toil:
 Our children too, alas! he sees them not,
 But as the husbandman who ne'er beholds

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His

Oft-times the night &c. Ovid had probably this passage of Sophocles before him, when he wrote the following lines in his epistle from Deianira to Hercules,

Vir mihi semper abest, & conjuge notior hospes,
 Monstraque, terribiles persequiturque feras;
 Ipsa domo vacua votis operata pudicis
 Torqueor, infesto ne vir ab hoste cadat;
 Inter serpentes, aprosque avidosque leones
 Jactor, & esuros terna per ora canes.

See Ep. 9.

His distant lands, save at the needful time
 Of seed or harvest; wand'ring thus, and thus
 Returning ever, is he sent to serve
 I know not whom; when crown'd with victory,
 Then most my fears prevail; for since he slew
 The valiant Iphitus, at Trachis here
 We live in exile with our gen'rous friend,
 The hospitable Ceyx; he mean-time

Is

I know not whom. Probably Eurystheus, king of Mycenæ.

—————Duros mille labores

Rege sub Eurystheo, fatis junonis iniquæ,

Pertulit.

VIRG. Æn. 7.

The fates having, it seems, decreed before the birth of Hercules and Eurystheus, that the first born of them should rule over the other, the implacable Juno, who was resolved to revenge the infidelity of Jupiter on his offspring, contrived (no very difficult matter indeed for the goddess of child-birth) to bring Eurystheus into the world first, who accordingly took the lead, made use of his privilege, and imposed on the noble Hercules what tasks he thought proper: for an account of his most distinguish'd labours, my readers may turn to the faithful chronicles of Ovid. See Mét. b. 9.

Since he slew &c. Iphitus, (as the story is told by Homer, in the Odyffey) was the son of Eurytus, and slain by Hercules, who, being a guest at his court, broke through the laws of hospitality, and murder'd the young prince, in order to possess himself of some beautiful mares, which, after the commission of this fact, he took away with him: Sophocles (as we shall find in the second act) has varied this circumstance.

According to Brumoy, who takes it from the commentators, the person slain by Hercules was a young man, a relation of Æneus, our hero's father-in-law; the murder was by a casual blow, and unpremeditated: Hercules notwithstanding, according to the custom of his country, submitted to a voluntary banishment for one year, having conducted Deianira and his family to Trachis, and committed them to the care of Ceyx, as mention'd by Hesiod.

—————Τρηχίνα δὲ τοὶ παραλαύων

Εἰς κηρυὰ ἀνακτα—————

Is gone, and none can tell me where; he went
 And left me most unhappy; O! some ill
 Hath sure befall'n him! for no little time
 Hath he been absent; 'tis full fifteen moons
 Since I beheld him, and no messenger
 Is come to Deianira; some misfortune
 Doubtless hath happen'd, for he left behind
 A dreadful scroll: O! I have pray'd the gods
 A thousand times it may contain no ill.

A T T E N D A N T.

My royal mistress, long have I beheld
 Thy tears and sorrows for thy lost Alcides;
 But if the counsels of a slave might claim
 Attention, I wou'd speak, wou'd ask thee wherefore
 Amongst thy sons, a num'rous progeny,
 None hath been sent in search of him, and chief
 Thy Hyllus, if he holds a father's health
 And safety dear: but, ev'n as we cou'd wish,
 Behold him here, if what I have advis'd
 Seem fitting, he is come in happiest hour
 To execute our purpose.

N 2

S C E N E

My royal mistress &c. The first introduction of confidantes on the stage has by some been attributed to the French writers; the scene before us is, however, a proof that it is of much more antient original: in the moderns it is perhaps more excusable, because the chorus of the Greeks seems to have render'd it altogether unnecessary.

S C E N E II.

H Y L L U S, D E I A N I R A, A T T E N D A N T.

D E I A N I R A.

O! my fon,

Oft from the meanest tongue the words of truth
 And safety flow; this woman, tho' a slave,
 Hath spoke what wou'd have well become the mouth
 Of freedom's self to utter.

H Y L L U S:

May I know

What she hath said?

D E I A N I R A.

She says it doth reflect

Disgrace on thee, thy father so long absent,
 Not to have gain'd some knowledge of his fate.

H Y L L U S.

I have already, if I may rely
 On what report hath said of him.

D E I A N I R A.

O! where,

Where is he then, my fon?

H Y L L U S.

These twelve months past,
 If fame say true, a Lydian woman held him

In shameful servitude.

D E I A N I R A.

If it be so,

May ev'ry tongue reproach him.

H Y L L U S.

But I hear

He now is free.

D E I A N I R A.

And where doth rumour say

He is? alive or dead?

H Y L L U S.

'Tis said, he leads

Or means to lead his forces tow'rds Eubœa,

The land of Eurytus.

D E I A N I R A.

Alas! my son,

Dost thou not know the oracles he left

Touching that kingdom.

H Y L L U S.

No, I know not of them;

What were they?

D E I A N I R A.

There, he said, or he shou'd dye,

Or, if he shou'd survive, his life to come

Wou'd

Wou'd all be happy: wilt thou not, my son,
 In this important crisis strive to aid
 Thy father? if he lives, we too shall live
 In safety; if he dyes, we perish with him.

H Y L L U S.

Mother, I go; long since I had been there
 But that the oracle did never reach
 Mine ears before; mean-time that happy fate,
 Which on my father ever wont to smile
 Propitious, shou'd not suffer us to fear;
 Thus far inform'd, I will not let the means
 Of truth escape me, but will know it all.

D E I A N I R A.

Haste then away, my son, and know, good deeds
 Tho' late perform'd are crown'd with sure success.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S, D E I A N I R A, A T T E N D A N T.

S T R O P H E I.

On thee we call, great god of day,
 To whom the night, with all her starry strain,
 Yields her solitary reign,
 To send us some propitious ray:

Say

On thee we call, &c. This is the first appearance of the chorus, composed
 most properly of the principal virgins of Trachis, who come in to condole with
 the

Say thou, whose all-beholding eye
 Doth nature's every part descry,
 What dang'rous ocean, or what land unknown
 From Deianira keeps Alcmena's valiant son.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

For she nor joy nor comfort knows,
 But weeps her absent lord, and vainly tries
 To close her ever-streaming eyes,
 Or sooth her sorrows to repose:
 Like the sad bird of night, alone
 She makes her solitary moan;
 And still, as on her widow'd bed reclin'd
 She lyes, unnumber'd fears perplex her anxious mind.

S T R O P H E II.

Ev'n as the troubled billows roar,
 When angry Boreas rules th' inclement skies,
 And waves on waves tumultuous rise
 To lash the Cretan shore:
 Thus sorrows still on sorrows prest,
 Fill the great Alcides' breast;

Unfading

the afflicted Deianira, and offer up a beautiful address to Apollo; in which are intermix'd, according to the custom of the antients, moral reflections on the instability of human affairs. The whole song naturally arises from the circumstances of the Drama, and is, according to Horace's rule, of a piece with the business of it.

Unfading yet shall his fair virtues bloom,
 And some protecting god preserve him from the tomb.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Wherefore, to better thoughts inclin'd,
 Let us with hope's fair prospect fill thy breast,
 Calm thy anxious thoughts to rest,
 And ease thy troubled mind:
 No bliss on man, unmix'd with woe,
 Doth Jove, great lord of all, bestow;
 But good with ill and pleasure still with pain,
 Like heaven's revolving signs, alternate reign.

E P O D E.

Not always do the shades of night remain,
 Nor ever with hard fate is man oppress'd;
 The wealth that leaves us may return again,
 Sorrow and joy successive fill the breast;
 Fearless then of every ill,
 Let chearful hope support thee still:
 Remember, queen, there is a pow'r above;
 And when did the great father, careful Jove,
 Forget his children dear, and kind paternal love?

D E I A N I R A.

The fame, it seems, of Deianira's woes
 Hath reach'd thine ears, but, O! thou little know'st

What I have suffer'd ; thou hast never felt
 Sorrows like mine ; and long may be the time
 E'er sad experience shall afflict thy soul
 With equal woes ! alas ! the youthful maid
 In flow'ry pastures still exulting feeds,
 Nor feels the scorching sun, the wint'ry storm,
 Or blast of angry winds ; secure she leads
 A life of pleasure, void of ev'ry care,
 Till to the virgin's happy state succeeds
 The name of wife ; then shall her portion come
 Of pain and anguish, then her terrors rise
 For husband and for children ; then perchance
 You too may know what 'tis to be unhappy,
 And judge of my misfortunes by your own.
 Long since oppress'd by many a bitter woe,
 Oft have I wept, but this transcends them all ;
 For I will tell thee, when Alcides last
 Forth on his journey went, he left behind
 An antient scroll ; alas ! before that time
 In all his labours he did never use
 To speak as one who thought of death, secure

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O

Always

The youthful maid, &c. Horace has caught this image.

Quæ velut latis equa trima campis,
 Ludit exultim, metuitque tangi,
 Nuptiarum expers. B. 3, Od. 11,

Always he seem'd of victory, but now
 This writing marks as if he were to dye,
 The portion out reserv'd for me, and wills
 His children to divide th' inheritance;
 Fixes the time, in fifteen moons, it says,
 He shou'd return; that past, or he must perish,
 Or, if he 'scape the fatal hour, thenceforth
 Shou'd lead a life of happiness and joy:
 Thus had the gods, it said, decreed, his life
 And toils shou'd end; so from their antient beach
 Dodona's doves foretold: th' appointed hour
 Approaches that must bring th' event, ev'n now,
 My friends, and therefore nightly do I start
 From my sweet slumbers, struck with deadly fear,
 Lest I shou'd lose the dearest best of men.

C H O R U S.

Of better omen be thy words; behold

A

Dodona's doves. At Dodona, a city of Chaonia in Epirus, was a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dodonaus, and in a grove near it a beach-tree on which two doves fate and prophecy'd: the scholiast in this place turns the doves into old women, because the word *πελεια* is not far from *πολροι*, and therefore may signify grey: the opinion of Eustatheus is rather more rational, who supposes these doves to have been the priestesses of Jupiter, and so call'd because they made their predictions by the observation of those birds; a much better conceit than that of Herodotus, who very gravely assures us, that the old women were call'd doves because their language was barbarous, and as unintelligible as that of birds; and for the same reason they might as well have been call'd partridges or quails.

A messenger, who bears (for on his brow
I see the laurel crown) some joyful news.

S C E N E IV.

MESSENGER, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT, CHORUS.

M E S S E N G E R.

I come, my royal mistress, to remove
Thy fears, and bring the first glad tidings to thee,
To tell thee that Alcmena's son returns
With life and victory; ev'n now he comes
To lay before his country's gods the spoils
Of glorious war.

D E I A N I R A.

What dost thou say, old man?

What dost thou tell me?

M E S S E N G E R.

That thy dear Alcides,
Thy valiant lord, with his victorious bands,
Will soon attend thee.

D E I A N I R A.

From our citizens
Didst thou learn this, or from a stranger's tongue?

M E S S E N G E R.

The herald Lichas, in yon flow'ry vale,
But now reported, and I fled impatient

Soon as I heard it, that I first might tell thee
And be rewarded for the welcome tale.

D E I A N I R A.

But wherefore tarries Lichas, if he bring
Glad tidings to me?

M E S S E N G E R.

'Tis impossible

To reach thee, for the Melian people throng
Around him, not a man but longs to know
Some news of thy Alcides, stops his journey,
Nor will release him till he hear it all;
Spite of himself he waits to satisfy
Their eager doubts; but thou wilt see him soon.

D E I A N I R A.

O! thou, who dwell'st on OEta's sacred top,
Immortal Jove! at length, tho' late, thou giv'st
The wish'd-for boon; let ev'ry female now,
You that within the palace do reside,
And you, my followers here, with shouts proclaim
The blest event! for, lo! a beam of joy,
I little hop'd, breaks forth, and we are happy.

S T R O P H E.

Quick let sounds of mirth and joy
Ev'ry chearful hour employ;

Haste,

Quick let sounds &c. This second song of the chorus is a hymn of thanksgiving to Apollo and Diana. Deianira, on the agreeable news of her husband's arrival,

Haste, and join the festive song,
 You, who lead the youthful throng,
 On whom the smiles of prosp'rous fate,
 And Hymen's promis'd pleasures wait,
 Now all your Io Pæans sing,
 To Phœbus, your protector and your king.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

And you, ye virgin train, attend,
 Not unmindful of your friend,
 His sister huntress of the groves,
 Who still her native Delos loves,
 Prepare the dance, and choral lays,
 To hymn the chaste Diana's praise;
 To her, and her attendant choir
 Of mountain-nymphs, attune the votive lyre.

E P O D E.

Already hath the god possess'd
 My soul, and rules the sov'reign of my breast;

Evoe,

arrival, calls together her friends and servants to partake of her happiness; it was probably accompanied both with music and dancing, *ad tibiam*, says Camerarius, *chorem agitatum apparet*; I have endeavour'd to adapt the English measure to the festivity of the subject; those who contend for the division into acts as parted by the songs of the chorus, will please to remember this is the second intermede.

Sov'reign of my breast. Almost a literal translation of 'Τυραν' εμας σφενος' 'tyrant of my soul'; an expression which carries with it a remarkably modern air, and much in the style of our dramatic lovers.

Evoe, Bacchus! lo! I come to join
Thy throng; around me doth the Thyrsus twine,
And I am fill'd with rage divine;
See! the glad messenger appears
To calm thy doubts, and to remove thy fears;
Let us our Io Pæans sing
To Phœbus, our protector and our king.

End of A C T I.

A C T II.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

D E I A N I R A.

TH E S E eyes deceive me, friends, or I behold
 A crowd approach this way, and with them comes
 The herald Lichas: let me welcome him,
 If he bring joyful news.

S C E N E II.

L I C H A S, I O L E, S L A V E S, D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

L I C H A S.

My royal mistress,
 We greet thee with fair tidings of success,
 And therefore shall our words deserve thy praise.

D E I A N I R A.

O! thou dear messenger, inform me first
 What first I wish to know, my lov'd Alcides,
 Doth he yet live, shall I again behold him?

L I C H A S.

I left him well; in health and manly strength
 Exulting.

D E I-

D E I A N I R A.

Where? in his own native land,
Or 'midst Barbarians?

L I C H A S.

On Eubœa's shore
He waits, with various fruits to crown the altar,
And pay due honours to Cenæan Jove.

D E I A N I R A.

Commanded by some oracle divine
Performs he this, or means but to fulfill
A vow of gratitude for conquest gain'd?

L I C H A S.

For vict'ry o'er the land, whence we have brought
These captive women, whom thou see'st before thee.

D E I A N I R A,

Whence come the wretched slaves? for, if I judge
Their state aright, they must indeed be wretched.

L I C H A S.

Know, when Alcides had laid waste the city
Of Eurytus, to him and to the gods
Were these devoted.

D E I-

Cenæan Jove. So call'd from Cenæum, a promontory in Eubœa, where altars were raised, and sacrifice offer'd up to him. The heathens, after victory, never omitted paying their grateful acknowledgements to the supreme power: though mistaken in the object of their worship, they are, perhaps, not unworthy of our imitation in their punctual and devout performance of it.

D E I A N I R A.

In Oechalia then

Hath my Alcides been this long long time?

L I C H A S.

Not so: in Lydia, (as himself reports)

Was he detain'd a slave; so Jove ordain'd;

And who shall blame the high decrees of Jove?

Sold to barbarian Omphale, he serv'd

Twelve tedious months; ill brook'd he the foul shame;

Then in his wrath he made a solemn vow

He wou'd revenge the wrong on the base author,

And bind in chains his wife and all his race:

Nor fruitless the resolve, for when the year

Of slav'ry past had expiated the crime

Imputed, soon with gather'd force he march'd

'Gainst the devoted Eurytus, the cause

(For so he deem'd him) of those hateful bonds;

Within his palace he had erst receiv'd

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P

Alcides,

Omphale. A queen of Lydia. Hercules, who, like many other heroes, was a dupe to women, became so enamour'd of her as to submit to every task which she thought proper to impose on him; she found him a willing slave and treated him accordingly, put a distaff in his hands, and sent him to spin with her maids. This fact, according to general tradition, was prior to his marriage with Deianira: Sophocles, however, has taken the poetical liberty to change the time as most agreeable to his purpose. Lichas softens the matter to Deianira, and makes it an involuntary servitude; though he well knew that his master had in reality sold himself. He calls her Barbarian Omphale, because the Greeks look'd on all nations but themselves as such.

Alcides, but with bitt'rest taunts revil'd him,
 Boasting, in spite of his all-conqu'ring arrows,
 His son's superior skill, and said a slave
 Like him shou'd bend beneath a freeman's pow'r;
 Then 'midst the banquet's mirth, enflam'd with wine,
 Cast forth his antient guest; this to revenge
 When Iphitus to search his pastur'd steeds
 Came to Tyrinthia, Hercules surpris'd,
 And, as he turn'd his wand'ring eyes aside,
 Hurl'd head-long from the mountain's top; great Jove,
 Father of men, from high Olympus saw
 And disapprov'd the deed, unworthy him
 Who ne'er before by fraud destroy'd his foes;
 With open force had he reveng'd the wrong,
 Jove had forgiv'n, but violence conceal'd
 The gods abhor, and therefore was he sold
 To slav'ry; Eurytus' unhappy sons
 Were punish'd too, and dwell in Erebus;
 Their city is destroy'd, and they, whom here
 Thou see'st, from freedom and prosperity,

Reduc'd

Hurl'd headlong &c. 'It is surprising (says Brumoy) that Sophocles should
 'impute such an action to his hero, even in an account that is afterwards
 'found to be fictitious.' But the French critic forgets that he had a foundation
 for this story in Homer, as we observed in a former note.

Reduc'd to wretchedness; to thee they come,
 Such was Alcides' will; which I, his slave,
 Have faithfully perform'd; himself e'er long
 Thou shalt behold, when to paternal Jove
 He hath fulfill'd his vows: thus my long tale
 Ends with the welcom'ft news which thou cou'd'ft hear,
 Alcides comes.

C H O R U S.

O! Queen, thy happiness
 Is great indeed, to see these slaves before thee,
 And know thy lord approaches.

D E I A N I R A.

I am happy:

To see my Hercules with vict'ry crown'd
 'Tis fit I shou'd rejoyce; and yet, my friends,
 If we consider well, we still shou'd fear
 For the successful, lest they fall from blifs.
 It moves my pity much when I behold
 These wretched captives in a foreign land
 Without a parent, and without a home,
 Thus doom'd to slav'ry here, who once perhaps
 Enjoy'd fair freedom's best inheritance:
 O! Jove, averter of each mortal ill,
 Let not my children ever feel thy arm

Thus rais'd against them! or, if 'tis decreed,
 Let it not be whilst Deianira lives:
 The fight of these alarms my fears: but tell me
 Thou poor afflicted captive, who thou art; [to Iole.
 Art thou a mother? or, as by thy years
 Thou seem'st, a virgin, and of noble birth?
 Can'st not thou tell me, Lichas, whence she sprang?
 Inform me, for, of all these slaves, she most
 Hath won my pity, and in her alone
 Have I observ'd a firm and gen'rous mind.

L I C H A S.

Why ask of me? I know not who she is;
 Perhaps of no mean rank.

D E I A N I R A.

The royal race
 Of Eurytus?

L I C H A S.

I know not, nor did e'er
 Inquire.

D E I A N I R A.

And did'st thou never hear her name
 From her companions?

L I C H A S.

Never. I perform'd

My

My work in silence.

D E I A N I R A.

Tell me then thyself,
Thou wretched maid, for I am most unhappy
Till I know who thou art.

L I C H A S.

She will not speak;
I know she will not; not a word hath past
Her lips, e'er since she left her native land,
But still in tears the hapless virgin mourns
The burthen of her sad calamity;
Her fate is hard: she merits your forgiveness.

D E I A N I R A.

Let her go in: I'll not disturb her peace,
Nor wou'd I heap fresh sorrows on her head,
She hath enough already: we'll retire.

Go where thou wilt; my cares within await me. [to Iole.

[Exeunt Lichas, Iole, and slaves.

S C E N E

She will not speak. Nothing can be better imagined, or more artfully contrived, than the concern which Deianira expresses for Iole: the youth, beauty, and modesty of the fair captive plead strongly in her behalf, and the queen is, as it were, enamour'd of her rival. She is anxious to know who and what she is; but Iole, whose business it was to conceal herself, remains silent. Cassandra behaves in the same manner with regard to Clytæmnestra, in the Agamemnon of Æschylus.

S C E N E III.

MESSENGER, DEIANIRA, CHORUS:

MESSENGER.

Stay thee awhile. I have a tale to tell
Touching these captives, which imports thee nearly,
And I alone am able to inform thee.

DEIANIRA.

What dost thou know? and why woud'st thou detain me?

MESSENGER.

Return, and hear me; when I spake before
I did not speak in vain, nor shall I now.

DEIANIRA.

Woud'st thou I call them back, or mean'st to tell
Thy secret purpose here to me alone?

MESSENGER.

To thee, and these thy friends, no more.

DEIANIRA.

'They're gone;

Now speak in safety.

MESSENGER.

Lichas is dishonest,

And

Stay thee awhile. This is the same messenger who appear'd in the first act to announce the arrival of Lichas: he is moved by the unhappy situation of Deianira, and stops her, as she is going out, to disclose the secret to her, and acquaint her with the treachery of Lichas.

And either now, or when I saw him last
Hath utter'd falsehood.

D E I A N I R A.

Ha! what dost thou say?

I understand thee not, explain it quickly.

M E S S E N G E R.

I heard him say, before attendant crouds,
It was this virgin, this fair slave destroy'd
OEchalia's lofty tow'rs, 'twas love alone
That waged the war, no Lydian servitude,
Nor Omphale, nor the pretended fall
Of Iphitus (for so the tale he brings
Wou'd fain persuade thee) know, thy own Alcides,
For that he cou'd not gain th' assenting voice
Of Eurytus to his unlawful love,
Laid waste the city where her father reign'd,
And slew him; now the daughter, as a slave,
Is sent to thee; the reason is too plain,
Nor think he meant her for a slave alone,
The maid he loves, that wou'd be strange indeed.
My royal mistress, most unwillingly
Do I report th' unwelcome news, but thought
It was my duty: I have told thee truth,
And the Trachinians bear me witness of it.

Wretch

Wretch that I am! to what am I reserv'd?
 What hidden pestilence within my roof
 Have I receiv'd unknowing! hapless woman;
 She seem'd of beauteous form and noble birth;
 Have you not heard her name, for Lichas said
 He knew it not.

M E S S E N G E R.

Daughter of Eurytus,
 Her name Iole; he had not enquir'd
 Touching her race.

C H O R U S.

Perdition on the man,
 Of all most wicked, who hath thus deceiv'd thee.

D E I A N I R A.

What's to be done, my friend? this dreadful news
 Afflicts me sorely.

C H O R U S.

Go, and learn the whole
 From his own lips, compel him to declare
 The truth.

D E I A N I R A.

I will; thou counsel'st me aright.

Shall

Perdition on the man, &c. The chorus here throws an oblique reflection on Hercules for his falshood to Deianira; though it is so worded, probably with a purpos'd ambiguity, as to be applicable to the herald Lichas.

C H O R U S.

Shall we attend you?

D E I A N I R A.

No; for see he comes,

Uncall'd.

S C E N E IV.

LICHAS, DEIANIRA, ATTENDANT, MESSENGER;

C H O R U S.

L I C H A S.

O! queen, what are thy last commands
To thy Alcides? for ev'n now I go
To meet him.

D E I A N I R A.

Hast thou ta'en so long a journey
To Trachis, and wou'dst now so soon return,
E'er I can hold some further converse with thee?

L I C H A S.

If thou wou'dst question me of aught, behold me
Ready to tell thee.

VOL. II.

Q

DEI-

O! queen, &c. The messenger's information having made the presence of Lichas on the stage immediately necessary, he is introduced with propriety to take his leave of Deianira, who embraces this opportunity to sound him with regard to the accusation, which she does with all the subtlety of a woman, and all the dignity of a queen, using every artifice to draw him into a confession, and at last persuading him to it by an affected indifference about her husband's fidelity.

D E I A N I R A.

Wilt thou tell me truth?

L I C H A S.

In all I know; so bear me witness, Jove!

D E I A N I R A.

Who is that woman thou hast brought?

L I C H A S.

I hear

She's of Eubœa; for her race and name
I know them not.

D E I A N I R A,

Look on me; who am I?

L I C H A S.

Why ask me this?

D E I A N I R A.

Be bold, and answer me.

L I C H A S.

Daughter of OEneus, wife of Hercules,
If I am not deceiv'd, 'tis Deianira,
My queen, my mistress.

D E I A N I R A.

Am I so indeed?

Am I thy mistress?

L I C H A S.

If I am not deceiv'd. This may, perhaps, appear odd to the English reader, but it is almost a literal translation of the original, 'ει μη κυρων λευκω ματαια,' 'nisi perperam video, nisi oculi me fallunt.'

L I C H A S.

Doubtless.

D E I A N I R A.

Why, 'tis well

Thou dost confess it: then what punishment
Wou'dst thou deserve, if thou wer't faithless to her?

L I C H A S.

How faithless? mean'st thou to betray me?

D E I A N I R A.

No:

The fraud is thine.

L I C H A S.

'Twas folly thus to stay

And hear thee; I must hence.

D E I A N I R A.

Thou shalt not go

Till I have ask'd thee one short question.

L I C H A S.

Ask it,

For so it seems thou art resolv'd.

D E I A N I R A.

Inform me;

Q 2

This

For so it seems, &c. The Greek is, *ε σιγηλος ει*, 'you are not very silent, or, 'not much given to silence;' a kind of impertinent familiarity from a servant to a mistress which modern delicacy would scarce admit; I have therefore soften'd it a little in the translation.

This captive, dost thou know her?

L I C H A S.

I have told thee;

What wou'dst thou more?

D E I A N I R A.

Didst thou not say, this slave,
'Tho' now, it seems, thou know'st her not, was daughter
Of Eurytus, her name Iole?

L I C H A S.

Where?

To whom did I say this? what witnesses have you?

D E I A N I R A.

Assembled multitudes; the citizens
Of Trachis heard thee.

L I C H A S.

They might say they heard
Reports like these; but must it therefore seem
A truth undoubted?

D E I A N I R A.

Seem? didst thou not swear
That thou hadst brought this woman to partake
The bed of my Alcides?

L I C H A S.

Did I say so?

But

But tell me who this stranger is.

D E I A N I R A.

The man

Who heard thee say, Alcides' love for her,
And not the Lydian, laid the city waste.

L I C H A S.

Let him come forth and prove it; 'tis no mark
Of wisdom thus to trifle with th' unhappy.

D E I A N I R A.

O! do not, I beseech thee by that pow'r,
Whose thunders roll o'er OËta's lofty grove,
Do not conceal the truth; thou speak'st to one
Not unexperienc'd in the ways of men;
To one who knows we cannot always joy
In the same object: 'tis an idle task
To take up arms against all-pow'rful love;
Love which commands the gods; love conquer'd me,
And wherefore shou'd it not subdue another,
Whose nature and whose passions are the same?
If my Alcides is indeed oppress'd
With this sad malady, I blame him not;

That

This stranger. It is plain from hence, that the messenger, who had accused Lichas, remains on the stage during all this scene; Lichas bids him stand forth and make good his charge; Deianira prevents him, and takes a better method to bring him to confession,

That were a folly; nor this hapless maid,
Who meant no ill, no injury to me;
'Tis not for this I speak; but, mark me well;
If thou wert taught by him to utter falsehood,
A vile and shameful lesson didst thou learn;
And if thou art thy own instructor, know,
Thou shalt seem wicked ev'n when most sincere,
And never be believ'd; speak then the truth;
For to be branded with the name of liar
Is ignominy fit for slaves alone,
And not for thee; nor think thou canst conceal it;
Those who have heard the tale, will tell it me.
If fear deters thee, thou hast little cause;
For to suspect his falsehood is my grief,
To know it, none; already have I seen
Alcides' heart estrang'd to other loves,
Yet did no rival ever hear from me
One bitter word, nor will I now reproach
This wretched slave, ev'n tho' she pines for him
With strongest love: alas! I pity her,
Whose beauty thus hath been the fatal cause
Of all her mis'ry, laid her country waste,
And brought her here, far from her native land,
A helpless captive: but no more of this;

Only remember, if thou must be false,
Be false to others, but be true to me.

C H O R U S.

She speaks most kindly to thee; be persuaded;
Hereafter thou shalt find her not ungrateful;
We too will thank thee.

L I C H A S.

O! my dearest mistress,
Not unexperienc'd thou in human life,
Nor ignorant; and therefore nought from thee
Will I conceal, but tell thee all the truth:
'Tis as he said; and Hercules indeed
Doth love Iole: for her sake alone
OEchalia, her unhappy country, fell;
This, (for 'tis fit I tell thee) he confess'd,
Nor will'd me to conceal it; but I fear'd
'Twou'd peirce thy heart to hear th' unwelcome tale,
And therefore own I wou'd have kept it from thee;
That crime, if such it was, I have committed;
But since thou know'st it all, let me entreat thee,
For her sake and thy own, O! do not hate
This wretched captive, but remember well,
What thou hast promis'd, faithfully perform.

He, whose victorious arm hath conquer'd all,
Now yields to her, and is a slave to love.

D E I A N I R A.

'Tis my resolve to act as thou advifest;
I'll not resist the gods, nor add fresh weight
To my calamity: let us go in,
That thou may'st bear my orders to Alcides,
And with them gifts in kind return for those
We have receiv'd from him; thou must not hence
With empty hand, who hither brought'st to me
Such noble presents, and so fair a train. [Exeunt.

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Thee, Venus, gods and men obey,
And universal is thy sway;
Need I recount the pow'rs subdu'd by love?
Neptune who shakes the solid ground,
The king of Erebus profound,
Or, the great lord of all, saturnian Jove?

To

He, whose victorious arm &c.

Quem nunquam Juno seriesque immensa laborum,
Pregerit, huic Iolen imposuisse jugum. Ovid.

Thou, Venus, &c. This is the third intermede, or song of the chorus: my female readers will please to observe that the gallant Sophocles has here given us another ode to love, which naturally introduces an account of the combat of Hercules and Achelous for Deianira, the heroine of the drama.

To mortals let the song descend,
 To pity our afflicted friend,
 And sooth the injur'd Deianira's woes:
 For her the angry rivals came,
 For her they felt an equal flame,
 For her behold the doubtful battle glows.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

In dreadful majesty array'd,
 Affrighting fore the fearful maid,
 Uprose the horned monarch of the flood;
 He, who through fair Ætolia's plain,
 Pours his rich tribute to the main;
 A bull's tremendous form bely'd the god;
 From his own Thebes, to win her love,
 With him the happier son of Jove,
 The great Alcides came, and in his hand
 The club, the bow, and glitt'ring spear;
 Whilst Venus, to her vot'ries near,
 Wav'd o'er their heads her all-deciding wand.

E P O D E.

Warm, and more warm the conflict grows,
 Dire was the noise of rattling bows,
 Of front to front oppos'd, and hand to hand;

Deep was the animated strife
For love, for conquest, and for life ;
Alternate groans re-echo'd thro' the land :
 Whilst pensive on the distant shore,
 She heard the doubtful battle roar,
Many a sad tear the hapless virgin shed ;
 Far from her tender mother's arms,
 She knows not yet for whom her charms
She keeps, or who shall share her bridal bed.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T II.

A C T III.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

D E I A N I R A.

MY guest, in pity to the captive train,
 Laments their woes, and takes his kind farewell;
 Mean-time, my friends, in secret came I here
 To pour forth all my mis'ries, and impart
 To you my inmost thoughts, my last resolve:
 Alas! within these walls I have receiv'd,
 Like the poor sailor, an unhappy freight
 To sink me down, no virgin, but a wife,
 The wife of my Alcides; his lov'd arms
 Now must embrace us both: my faithful lord
 (Faithful and good I thought him) thus rewards
 My tender cares, and all the tedious toils
 I suffer'd for him; but I will be calm;
 For 'tis an evil I have felt before:
 And yet to live with her! with her to share
 My husband's bed! what woman cou'd support it!
 Her youth is stealing onward to it's prime,
 Whilst mine is wither'd, and the eye, which longs

To pluck the op'ning flow'r, from the dry leaf
 Will turn aside; her younger charms, I fear,
 Have conquer'd, and henceforth in name alone
 Shall Deianira be Alcides' wife.

But ill do rage and violence become
 The prudent matron, therefore mark me well,
 And hear what I have purpos'd, to relieve
 My troubled heart: within a brazen urn,
 Conceal'd from ev'ry eye, I long have kept
 That antient gift which Nessus did bequeath me,
 The hoary centaur, who was wont for hire
 To bear the trav'ller o'er the rapid flood
 Of deep Evenus, not with oars or fail
 He stem'd the torrent, but with nervous arm
 Oppos'd, and pass'd it: me, when first a bride
 I left my father's hospitable roof
 With my Alcides, in his arms he bore

Athwart

Nessus. This story, which is the foundation of the piece before us, strip'd of all it's poetical ornaments, is as follows. Nessus was one of that fabulous race call'd centaurs, half man and half horse; his usual employment was the carrying passengers over the river Evenus; Deianira entrusted herself to his care; the centaur fell in love with, and would have ravish'd her; Hercules perceiving his design, slew him with one of his arrows, poison'd with the blood of the Lernæan hydra: Nessus, to revenge himself on his rival, told Deianira in his last moments, that if ever her husband proved faithless she might recall his love by dipping his garment in some of that blood which was then streaming from him; Deianira believed him, and preserved the philtre; the consequence of this forms the subject of the Trachiniæ.

Athwart the current, half way o'er, he dar'd
To offer violence, I shriek'd aloud;
When lo! the son of Jove, his bow swift bent,
Sent forth a shaft, and pierc'd the monster's breast,
Who with his dying voice did thus address me,
' Daughter of OEneus, listen to my words,
' So shalt thou profit by the last sad journey
' Which I shall ever go; if in thy hand
' Thou take the drops out-flowing from the wound
' This arrow made, dip'd in th' envenom'd blood
' Of the Lernæan hydra, with that charm
' May'st thou subdue the heart of thy Alcides,
' Nor shall another ever gain his love:'
Mindful of this, my friends, (for from that hour
In secret have I kept the precious gift)
Behold a garment dip'd ith' very blood
He gave me, nor did I forget to add
What he enjoin'd, but have prepar'd it all;
I know no evil arts, nor wou'd I learn them,
For they who practise such are hateful to me;
I only wish the charm may be of pow'r
To win Alcides from this virgin's love,
And bring him back to Deianira's arms,

If ye shall deem it lawful, but if not
I'll go no farther.

C H O R U S.

Cou'd we be assur'd
Such is indeed th' effect, 'tis well determin'd.

D E I A N I R A.

I cannot but believe it, tho' as yet
Experience never hath confirm'd it to me.

C H O R U S.

Thou shoud'st be certain; thou but seem'st to know
If thou hast never try'd.

D E I A N I R A.

I'll try it soon;
For see ev'n now he comes out at the portal:
Let him not know our purpose; if the deed
Be wrong, concealment may prevent reproach;
Therefore be silent.

S C E N E II.

L I C H A S, D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

L I C H A S.

Speak thy last commands,
Daughter of OEncus, for already long
Have we delay'd our journey.

D E I-

D E I A N I R A.

Know then, Lichas,
 That whilst thou commun'dst with thy friends, myself
 Have hither brought a garment which I wove
 For my Alcides, thou must bear it to him;
 Tell him, no mortal must with touch profane
 Pollute the sacred gift, nor sun behold it,
 Nor holy temple, nor domestic hearth,
 E'er at the altar of paternal Jove
 Himself shall wear it; 'twas my solemn vow
 Whene'er he shou'd return, that, cloth'd in this,
 He to the gods shou'd offer sacrifice.
 Bear too this token, he will know it well;
 Away: remember to perform thy office,
 But go no farther, so shall double praise,
 And favour from us both reward thy duty.

L I C H A S.

If I have aught of skill, by Hermes right

Instructed

Nor sun behold it &c. Deianira probably gave this caution because she imagined that the virtue of her charm wou'd be extracted by fire, and consequently, if held near that, wou'd have no effect when Hercules put it on.

This token. This token was a σφραγίς, or seal-ring, which Deianira sent with the vest, to convince Hercules that it came from her.

By Hermes &c. Hermes or Mercury always appears as messenger of the gods, and favourite errand-boy of Jupiter; he therefore naturally presided over mortal messengers, and is properly mention'd by the herald as his patron and instructor.

Instructed in his art, I will not fail
To bear thy gift, and faithful to report
What thou hast said.

D E I A N I R A.

Begone; what here hath past
Thou know'st.

L I C H A S.

I do; and shall bear back the news
That all is well.

D E I A N I R A.

Thou art thyself a witness
How kindly I receiv'd the guest he sent me.

L I C H A S.

It fill'd my heart with pleasure to behold it.

D E I A N I R A.

What can'st thou tell him more? alas! I fear
He'll know too well the love I bear to him;
Wou'd I cou'd be as certain he'd return it!

[Exeunt.

S C E N E

To bear thy gift.

Ignaroque Lichæ, quid tradat nescia, luctus
Ipsa suos tradit.

says the elegant Ovid, who has told this story in a most agreeable manner in the ninth book of his metamorphosis.

S C E N E III.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

You, who on OËta's craggy summit dwell,
 Or from the rock, whence gushing riv'lets flow,
 Bathe in the warmer springs below,
 You, who near the Melian bay
 To golden-shafted Dian hymn the lay,
 Now haste to string the lyre, and tune the vocal shell:

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

No mournful theme demands your pensive strain,
 But such as kindled by the sacred fire
 The muses might themselves admire,
 A loud and chearful song; for see,
 The son of Jove returns with victory,
 And richest spoils reward a life of toil and pain:

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S

S T R O P H E

You, who on Oeta's, &c. This is the fourth song or intermede of the Chorus, who, rejoicing at the expected arrival of Hercules, invite the neighbouring youths and maidens to celebrate the festival, and welcome the returning conqueror.

Warmer springs, &c. It is reported that Vulcan first raised warm springs in Trachis or Sicily for the use of Hercules, whence warm baths were usually call'd *λῶτρα Ἡρακλεια* 'Herculean Baths.'

The Melian bay, &c. The bay of Melis was not far from Trachis and adjoining to Artemisium, celebrated by the famous sea-fight between the Grecians and the Persians, on the same day with the battle at Thermopylæ; near it was a temple sacred to Diana.

S T R O P H E II.

Far from his native land he took his way :
 For twelve long moons, uncertain of his fate,
 Did we lament his exil'd state,
 What time his anxious wife deplor'd
 With never-ceasing tears her absent lord ;
 But Mars at last hath clos'd his long laborious day.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Let him from fair Eubæa's isle appear ;
 Let winds and raging seas oppose no more,
 But waft him to the wish'd-for shore ;
 Th' anointed vest's persuasive charms
 Shall bring him soon to Deianira's arms,
 Soon shall we see the great the lov'd Alcides here.

End of A C T III.

A C T IV.

Far from his native land, &c. The last Strophe and Antistrophe of this Chorus are so drolly translated by Mr. Adams, that I cannot refuse my readers a sight of it. It runs as follows ;

S T R O P H E II.

' He whom, absent from home twelve months, we waited for, being on the
 ' rough sea, knowing nothing of him, but his dear miserable wife, the wretched
 ' lady, with ever streaming tears afflicted her sad heart ; but now raging
 ' Mars hath finish'd the term of his labours.'

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

' Let him come, nor let his ship stand still e'er he arrives at this city,
 ' leaving this island habitation, where he is said to sacrifice, whence let him
 ' come hastening all the day, clad with this well besmeared coat of reconci-
 ' liation of his love to Deianira, as the Centaur directed her.'

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

DEIANIRA, CHORUS.

DEIANIRA.

ALAS! my friends, I fear I've gone too far.

CHORUS.

Great queen, in what?

DEIANIRA.

I know not what; but dread
Something to come, left where I had most hope
Of happiness, I meet with bitt'rest woe.

CHORUS.

Mean'st thou thy gift to Hercules?

DEIANIRA.

I do;

Nor wou'd I henceforth counsel those I lov'd
To do a dark and desp'rate deed like this,
Uncertain of th' event.

CHORUS.

How was it? speak,

If thou can'st tell us.

S 2

DEIANIRA.

D E I A N I R A.

O! 'twas wonderful!

For you shall hear it; know then, the white wool
 Wherein I wrap'd th'anointed vest, untouch'd
 By any hand, drop'd self-consum'd away,
 And down the stone, ev'n like a liquid, flow'd
 Dissolving: (but 'tis fit I tell you all)
 Whate'er the wounded centaur did enjoin me
 Mindful to practise, sacred as the laws
 On brazen tablets grav'd, I have perform'd:
 Far from the fire, and from the sun's warm beams
 He bad me keep the charm, from ev'ry eye
 In secret hid, till time should call on me
 T'anoint and use it: this was done; and now,
 The fleece in secret pluck'd, the charm prepar'd,
 Long from the sun within a chest conceal'd,
 At length I brought it forth, and sent the gift
 To my Alcides, when behold a wonder,
 Most strange for tongue to tell, or heart of man

Ev'n

The white wool, &c. This wool was probably made use of as a sponge, with which, after dipping it in the blood, she wetted the magic robe; this imbibing the fiery and poisonous particles, on being exposed to the air, took fire, and consumed away, a circumstance which cou'd not fail to alarm the fears of Deianira, who now begins to repent of her hazardous attempt: her remorse is naturally and pathetically described, and at the same time gradually prepares the audience for the catastrophe.

Ev'n to conceive! perchance the wool I cast
Into the sunshine; soon as it grew warm
It fell to dust, consuming all away
In most strange manner, then from th' earth uprose
In frothy bubbles, e'vn as from the grape
In yellow autumn flows the purple wine:
I know not what to think; but much I fear
I've done a horrid deed: for, why, my friends,
Why should the dying savage wish to serve
His murth'rer? that could never be: O! no;
He only meant by flatt'ry to destroy
Me his destroyer: truth is come too late,
And I alone have slain my dear Alcides.
I know that by his arrows Chiron fell;
I know whate'er they touch'd they still were fatal;
That very poison mingled with the blood
Of dying Nessus, will not that too kill
My Hercules? it must: but if he dies,
My resolution is to perish with him;

Those

Chiron. Chiron was one of the Centaurs, and was wounded by Hercules with one of his arrows dip'd in the blood of the Hydra: the story is told at large in the fifth book of Ovid's *Fasts*. Deianira recollects that Hercules had slain Nessus also with one of the same arrows which she knew to be poison'd; the effect was the same on both, and the consequence but too visible with regard to Hercules himself.

Those, who their honour and their virtue prize,
Can never live with infamy and shame.

C H O R U S.

'Tis fit we tremble at a deed of horror;
But 'tis not fitting, e'er we know th' event,
To give up hope, and yield us to despair.

D E I A N I R A.

There is no hope when evil counsel's ta'en.

C H O R U S.

But when we err from ignorance alone,
Small is the crime, and slight the punishment;
Such is thy fault.

D E I A N I R A.

The guiltless may talk thus,
Who know no ill; not those, who are unhappy.

C H O R U S.

No more; unless thou mean'st thy son shou'd hear thee,
Who now returns from search of thy Alcides:
Behold him here.

S C E N E II.

H Y L L U S, D E I A N I R A, C H O R U S.

H Y L L U S.

O! wou'd that thou wert dead!

Wou'd

Wou'd I were not thy fon! or, being so,
Wou'd I cou'd change thy wicked heart!

D E I A N I R A,

My fon,

What means this passion?

H Y L L U S.

Thou hast slain thy husband;

This very day my father hast thou slain.

D E I A N I R A.

Alas! my child, what say'st thou?

H Y L L U S.

What is past,

And therefore must be; who can e'er undo

The deed that's done?

D E I A N I R A.

But who cou'd say I did it?

H Y L L U S.

I saw it with these eyes; I heard it all

From his own lips.

D E I A N I R A.

Where did'st thou see him then?

Tell me, O! quickly tell me.

H Y L L U S.

H Y L L U S.

If I must,

Observe me well: when Hercules, return'd
 From conquest, had laid waste the noble city
 Of Eurytus, with fair triumphal spoils
 He to Eubœa came, where o'er the sea,
 Which beats on ev'ry side, Cenæum's top
 Hangs dreadful, thither to paternal Jove
 His new rais'd altars in the leafy wood
 He came to visit; there did my glad eyes
 Behold Alcides first: as he prepar'd
 The frequent victim, from the palace came
 Lichas thy Messenger, and with him brought
 The fatal gift: wrap'd in the deadly garment
 (For such was thy command) twelve oxen then
 Without a blemish, firstlings of the spoil,
 He slew; together next a hundred fell,
 The mingled flock: pleas'd with his gaudy vest

And

There did my glad eyes &c. It is observed that the distance from Cenæum to Trachis is too great to admit of Hyllus's return in the short time which Sophocles has allow'd him; for how could Hyllus perform this journey, see his father, assist at the sacrifice, be a witness of his agonies, and return back to Trachis, during the representation of little more than one act? The unity of time is here apparently broken. The poet, as Brumoy imagines, presumed on the distance of Athens, from the scene of action, and probably met with indulgence from his spectators, though it was not agreeable to his usual accuracy in these particulars.

And happy in it he awhile remain'd,
Off'ring with joy his grateful sacrifice ;
But lo! when from the holy victim rose
The bloody flame, and from the pitchy wood
Exhal'd it's moisture, fudden a cold sweat
Bedew'd his limbs, and to his body stuck
As by the hand of some artificer
Close joyn'd to ev'ry part, the fatal vest ;
Convulsion rack'd his bones, and through his veins,
Like the fell serpent's deadly venom, rag'd ;
Then question'd he the wretched guiltless Lichas
By what detested arts he had procur'd
The poison'd garb ; he, ignorant of all,
Cou'd only say, it was the gift he brought
From Deianira ; when Alcides heard it,
Tortur'd with pain, he took him by the foot,
And hurl'd him headlong on a pointed rock
That o'er the ocean hung ; his brains dash'd forth
With mingled blood flow'd thro' his clotted hair
In horrid streams ; the multitude with shrieks
Lamented loud the fury of Alcides,
And Lichas' hapless fate ; none durst oppose
His raging phrenzy ; prostrate on the earth

Now wou'd he lay and groan ; and now uprising
 Wou'd bellow forth his griefs ; the mountain-tops
 Of Locris, and Eubœa's rocks return'd
 His dreadful cries ; then on the ground out-stretch'd
 In bitt'rest wrath he curs'd the nuptial bed
 Of OEneus, and his execrations pour'd
 On thee his worst of foes : at length his eyes,
 Distorted forth from the surrounding smoak,
 He cast on me, who midst attending crouds
 Wept his sad fate ; ' approach, he cry'd, my son,
 ' Do not forsake thy father, rather come
 ' And share his fate than leave me here ; O ! haste,
 ' And take me hence ; bear me where never eye
 ' Of mortal shall behold me ; O ! my child,
 ' Let me not perish here : ' thus spake my father,
 And I obey'd : distracted with his pains
 A vessel brings him to this place, and soon
 Living or dead you will behold him here.
 This have thy horrid machinations done
 For thy Alcides : O ! may justice doom thee
 To righteous punishment, if it be lawful
 For me to call down vengeance on a mother,
 As sure it is, on one who hath disclaim'd

All piety like thee; the earth sustains not
A better man than him whom thou hast murder'd,
Nor shalt thou e'er behold his like again.

[Exit Deianira.

CHORUS.

Whence this abrupt departure? know'st thou not
To go in silence thus confirms thy guilt?

HÆMON.

Let her be gone: and may some prosp'rous gale
Waft her far off, that these abhorring eyes
May never see her more: what boots the name
Of mother, when no longer she performs
A mother's duty? let her go in peace,
And, for her kindness to my father, soon
May she enjoy the blessing she bestow'd.

T 2

CHORUS.

Nor shalt thou, &c. 'Οποιον αλλον εκ οψει ποτε.' says the original. Shakespear makes his Hamlet speak the same language.

Take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

Hamlet.

To go in silence, &c. This silence exactly resembles that of Eurydice in the Antigone before taken notice of, and, as Brumoy observes, is infinitely preferable to Ovid's frequent repetition of

Impia quid cessas, Deianira, mori?

'On ne s'exhorte point (says the French critic) à mourir, quand le dessein en est bien pris. Beaucoup moins le fait on avec tant d'art; le silence est plus eloquent, & plus vif.'

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

True was the oracle divine,
 Long since deliver'd from Dodona's shrine,
 Which said, Alcides' woes shou'd last
 Till twelve revolving years were past;
 Then shou'd his labours end in sweet repose:
 Behold, my friends, 'tis come to pass,
 'Tis all fulfill'd; for who, alas!
 In peaceful death, or toil or slav'ry knows?

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

If deep within his tortur'd veins
 The centaur's cruel poison reigns,
 That from the Hydra's baleful breath
 Destructive flow'd, replete with death,
 On him another sun shall never rise;
 The venom runs thro' ev'ry part,
 And, lo! to Nessus' direful art
 Alcides falls a helpless sacrifice.

S T R O P H E

True was the oracle, &c. This is the fifth intermede or song of the Chorus, and, if we divide the play into acts, must conclude the fourth, as it is the only part where the stage can be supposed vacant: it turns, we see, on the double sense of the oracle, which was now accomplish'd in the death of Hercules. This oracle is mention'd by Deianira in the first scene of the tragedy, and by Hercules himself also in the last.

S T R O P H E II.

Poor Deianira long deplor'd
 Her waining charms, and ever faithless lord;
 At length by evil counsel sway'd
 Her passion's dictates she obey'd,
 Resolv'd Alcides' doubtful truth to prove;
 But now, alas! laments his fate
 In ceaseless woe, and finds too late
 A dying husband, and a foreign love.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Another death must soon succeed,
 Another victim soon shall bleed,
 Fatal, Alcides, was the dart
 That pierc'd the rival monarch's heart,
 And brought Iole from her native land;
 From Venus did our sorrows flow,
 The secret spring of all our woe,
 For nought was done but by her dread command.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T IV.

A C T V.

Another death &c. The Chorus foretells the death of Deianira, who had already declared that if she did not succeed in the attempt to regain her husband's affection, she would not long survive him; this prepares the audience for the scene that follows.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

[A noise within the palace.

C H O R U S.

O R I'm deceiv'd, or I did hear loud shrieks
 Within the palace; 'twas the voice of one
 In anguish; doubtless some calamity
 Hath fall'n upon us now; what can it be?
 But see, yon matron, with contracted brow
 And unaccustom'd sadness, comes to tell
 The dreadful news.

S C E N E II.

N U R S E, C H O R U S,

N U R S E.

What woes, my hapless daughters,
 Alcides' fatal gift hath brought upon us?

C H O R U S.

What dost thou tell us?

N U R S E.

Deianira treads
 The last sad path of mortals.

C H O R U S.

Is she gone?

N U R S E.

NURSE.

'Tis so indeed.

CHORUS.

What! dead!

NURSE.

Again I say

She is no more.

CHORUS.

Alas! how did she perish?

NURSE.

Most fearfully: 'twas dreadful to behold.

CHORUS.

How fell she then?

NURSE.

By her own hand.

CHORUS.

But wherefore?

What madness, what disorder? what cou'd move her

To perpetrate so terrible a deed?

Thus adding death to death.

NURSE.

The fatal steel

Destroy'd her.

CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

Did'st thou see it;

N U R S E.

I was by,

Close by her side.

C H O R U S.

How was it?

N U R S E.

Her own arm

Struck the sad blow.

C H O R U S.

Indeed!

N U R S E.

Most veritably.

C H O R U S.

In evil hour this rival virgin came

To bring destruction here.

N U R S E.

And so she did;

Had'st thou like me been witness to the deed,

Thou woud'st much more have pity'd her.

C H O R U S.

Alas!

How cou'd a woman do it?

N U R S E.

N U R S E.

'Twas most dreadful,
 As thou shalt hear, for I will tell thee all.
 Soon as she enter'd at the palace gate
 And saw her son prepare the fun'ral bed,
 To th' inmost chamber silent she retir'd
 From ev'ry eye, there, at the altar's feet
 Falling, lamented loud her widow'd state;
 And ever as she lit on aught her hands
 Had us'd in happier days, the tears wou'd flow;
 From room to room she wander'd, and if chance
 A lov'd domestic cross'd her she wou'd weep
 And mourn her fate, for ever now depriv'd
 Of converse sweet, and hymenæal joys;
 Then wou'd she strew her garments on the bed
 Of her Alcides, (for conceal'd I watch'd
 Her ev'ry motion) throw herself upon it,
 And as the tears in a warm flood burst forth;

V O L. II.

U

' Farewel!

And ever as she lit &c. Such little incidents as these, arising with propriety from situation and circumstance, contribute as much as any thing to point out the superiority of a good writer: in Sophocles we always meet with the language of nature, and a complete knowledge of the human heart, without any of those forced conceits and refinements so frequent in modern writers: nothing can exceed the simplicity and elegance of this description; Virgil felt all it's merit, and has copied it closely. See *Æn.* b. 4.

' Farewel! (she cry'd) for ever farewell now
 ' My nuptial couch! for never shalt thou more
 ' Receive this wretched burthen;' thus she spake,
 And with quick hand the golden button loos'd,
 Then cast her robe aside, her bosom bared
 And seem'd prepar'd to strike; I ran and told
 The dreadful purpose to her son, too late
 We came, and saw her wounded to the heart;
 The pious son beheld his bleeding mother
 And wept, for well he knew, by anger fir'd,
 And the fell centaur's cruel fraud betray'd,
 Unweeting she had done the dreadful deed:
 Close to her side he laid him down, and join'd
 His lips to hers, lamenting fore that thus
 He had accus'd her guiltless; then deplor'd
 His own sad fate, thus suddenly bereav'd
 Of both his parents: you have heard my tale.
 Who to himself shall promise length of life?
 None but the fool: for, O! to day alone
 Is ours; we are not certain of to-morrow.

C H O R U S.

Which shall I weep? which most our hearts shou'd fill
 With grief, the present, or the future ill?
 The dying, or the dead? 'tis equal woe
 To feel the stroke, or fear th' impending blow.

S T R O P H E.

S T R O P H E.

O! for a breeze to waft us o'er
 Propitious to some distant shore!
 To shield our souls from fore affright,
 And save us from the dreadful fight:
 That fight the hardest heart wou'd move
 In his last pangs the son of Jove;
 To see the poison, run through ev'ry vein,
 And limbs convuls'd with agonizing pain.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Behold th' attendant train is nigh,
 I hear the voice of misery;
 Ev'n as the plaintive nightingale,
 That warbles sweet her mournful tale;

U 2

Silent

O! for a breeze, &c. This is the sixth and last intermede, or song of the chorus, who, alarm'd at the approaching fate of Hercules, and shock'd at the death of Deianira, lament their own distressful situation, as obliged to be witnesses of so melancholy a scene: it is remarkable, that throughout this play the chorus's are every one of them closely attach'd to the subject, and arise naturally from the various circumstances of it.

Some distant shore. The learned reader, who consults this passage in the original, will find that the scholiasts have entirely mistaken the meaning of it; and, according to custom, misled the translators, one of whom renders it thus, 'Utinam aliquis aspiret secundus nostram ad domum ventus!' 'Would to heaven a favourable wind would blow us home!' though it is apparent that as the chorus consists of virgins of Trachis, they were at home already, and only wish'd to be removed for a time, to avoid a fight so disagreeable as the death of Hercules. Ratallerus, who, as I observed, is the only translator that seems to have understood Sophocles, perceived this absurdity, and has given

Silent and slow they lead him on ;

Hark ! I hear Alcides groan !

Again 'tis silence all ! this way they tread ;

Or sleeps he now, or rests he with the dead ?

S C E N E III.

HERCULES, HYLLUS, NURSE, CHORUS,
ATTENDANTS.

HYLLUS.

Alas ! my father ; whither shall I go,

Wretch that I am ! O ! where shall I betake me ?

What will become of thy afflicted son ?

A T T E N D A N T.

Speak softly, youth, do not awake his pains ;

Refrain thy grief, for yet Alcides lives,

Tho' verging to the tomb ; be calm.

HYLLUS.

What say'st thou ?

Doth he yet live ?

A T T E N D A N T.

He doth ; disturb not thus

His slumbers, nor provoke the dire disease.

HYLLUS.

Alas ! I cannot bear to see him thus.

[Hercules awakes.

H E R-

H E R C U L E S.

O! Jove! where am I, and with whom? what land
 Contains the wretched Hercules, oppress'd
 With never-ending woes? ah, me! again
 The deadly poison racks me.

A T T E N D A N T. [to Hyllus.]

See'st thou not
 'Twere better far to have remain'd in silence,
 And not awak'd him.

H Y L L U S.

'Twas impossible
 Unmov'd to look on such calamity ;
 I cou'd not do it.

H E R C U L E S.

O! Cenæan rocks,
 Where smook the sacred altars! is it thus
 O! Jove, thou dost reward my piety?
 What dreadful punishment is this thy hand
 Hath laid on me, who never cou'd deserve
 Such bitter wrath? what incantations now,

What

O! Jove, where am I. Hercules, we must suppose, is here brought on the stage on a couch or litter, 'affertur (says Camerarius) inter cruciatus sopitus in lectulo;' his pains intermitting for a short time, he is drop'd into a slumber; in this condition he is met by Hyllus, who imagines him to be dead; the chorus perceive he is only asleep; he awakes in agony; the scene strongly resembles one in the Hippolytus of Euripides.

What pow'r of med'cine can assuage my pain,
 Unless great Jove assisted? health to me
 Without him, were a miracle indeed.
 Let me, O! let me rest, refuse me not
 A little slumber; why will ye torment me?
 Why bend me forward? O! 'tis worse than death;
 Had you not waked me, I had been at peace:
 Again it rages with redoubled force;
 Where are you now, ye thankless Græcians, where,
 Whom I have toil'd to serve on the rough main,
 And through the pathless wood? where are ye now
 To help a dying wretch? will no kind hand
 Stretch forth the friendly sword, or in the flame
 Consume me? none, alas! will cut me off
 From hated life,

A T T E N D A N T.

O! youth! assist thy father;
 It is beyond my strength; thy quicker fight
 May be more useful.

H Y L L U S.

My poor aid is ready;
 But wherefoe'er I am, 'tis not in me
 T' expel the subtle poison that destroys him;
 Such is the wil of Jove.

H E R C U L E S.

My son, my son,

Where art thou? bear me up, assist me; O!
 Again it comes, th' unconquerable ill,
 The dire disease; O! Pallas, aid me now,
 Draw forth thy sword, my son; strike, strike thy father,
 And heal the wound thy impious mother made;
 O! cou'd I see her like myself destroy'd,
 I shou'd be happy! brother of great Jove,
 Sweet Pluto, hear me! O! with speedy death
 Lay me to rest, and bury all my woes.

C H O R U S.

The anguish of th' unhappy man, my friends,
 Is terrible; I tremble but to hear him.

H E R C U L E S.

What hath this body suffer'd! O! the toils,
 The labours I endur'd, the pangs I felt,
 Unutterable woes! but never aught
 So dreadful as this fore calamity
 Oppress'd Alcides; not the wife of Jove,
 Nor vile Eurystheus cou'd torment me thus,

As

O! the toils &c. This pathetic lamentation of Hercules hath met with universal applause from the admirers and critics of antiquity. The great Roman orator has left us a translation of it, which remains almost the only specimen of his poetical abilities. See Tully's Tusculan questions, b. 2.

As OENEUS thy deceitful daughter hath:
Oh! I am tangled in a cruel net,
Wov'n by the furies; it devours my flesh,
Dries up my veins, and drinks the vital blood;
My body's wither'd, and I cannot break
Th' indissoluble chain: nor hostile spear,
Nor earth-born giants, nor the savage herd,
The wild Barbarian, or the Græcian host,
Not all the nations I have journey'd o'er
Cou'd do a deed like this: at last I fall
Like a poor coward, by a woman's hand,
Unarm'd, and unassisted; O! my son,
Now prove thyself the offspring of Alcides;
Nor let thy reverence of a mother's name
Surpass thy duty to an injur'd father;
Go, bring her hither, give her to my wrath,
That I may see whom thou wilt most lament,
When thou behold'st my vengeance fall on her;
Fear not, my son, but go; have pity on me,
Pity thy father; all must pity me,
Whilst they behold, ev'n as the tender maid,
Alcides weep, who never wept before.
I bore my sorrows all without a groan,
But now thou see'st I am a very woman,

Come

Come near, my child; O! think what I endure,
 For I will shew thee; look on this poor body,
 Let all behold it: what a fight is here!
 Oh! me! again the cruel poison tears
 My entrails, nor affords a moment's ease.
 O! take me, Pluto, to thy gloomy reign;
 Father of lightning, mighty Jove, fend down
 Thy bolt, and strike me now! again it racks,
 It tortures me! O! hands, that once had strength,
 And you, my finewy arms, was it by you
 The terrible Nemæan lion fell,
 The dreadful hydra, and the lawless race
 Of centaurs? did this wither'd hand subdue
 The Erymanthian boar, wide-wasting plague!
 And from the shades of Orcus drag to light
 The triple-headed monster? by this arm
 Did the fierce guardian of the golden fruit
 In Libya's deserts fall? unnumber'd toils
 Have I endur'd of old, and never yet
 Did mortal bear a trophy from Alcides:
 But nerveless now this arm; see, from the bone

V O L. II.

X

Starts

Nemæan lion. Nemæa was a wood near Argia in Peioponnesus, where Hercules slew a lion of prodigious size and fierceness.

The Erymanthian boar. Erymanthus was a mountain of Arcadia, where Hercules slew a wild boar that infested the country.

Darts the loose flesh; I waste beneath the pow'r
 Of this dark pestilence: O! Hercules,
 Why boast thy mother sprung of noblest race,
 And vainly call thyself the son of Jove?
 But, mark me well; this creeping shadow still,
 Poor as it is, shall yet revenge itself
 On her who did the execrable deed;
 Wou'd she were here to feel my wrath, to know
 And teach mankind, that Hercules tho' dead,
 As whilst he liv'd, can scourge the guilty still!

C H O R U S.

Unhappy Greece! how wilt thou mourn the loss
 Of such a man!

H Y L L U S.

Permit me but to speak,
 Distemper'd as thou art, my father, hear me;
 Nought shall I ask unfit for thee to grant;
 Be calm and listen to me; yet thou know'st not
 How groundless thy complaints, and what new joy
 Awaits thee still.

H E R C U L E S.

Be brief then, and inform me;
 My pains afflict me so I cannot guess
 Thy subtle purpose.

H Y L L U S.

H Y L L U S.

'Twas to speak of her,
My mother; 'twas to tell thee of her state
And how unweeting she offended thee.

H E R C U L E S.

Thou worst of children! woud'st thou then defend
The murth'rer of thy father? dar'st thou thus
Recall the sad remembrance of her crime?

H Y L L U S.

It must not be conceal'd; I know too well
I can no longer hide it.

H E R C U L E S.

What? her guilt?

'Tis known already.

H Y L L U S.

Thou'lt not always think so.

H E R C U L E S.

Speak then, but take good heed thou shew thyself
Worthy thy father.

H Y L L U S.

Know then,—she is dead!

H E R C U L E S.

O! dreadful! murder'd? by what hand?

H Y L L U S.

Her own.

T R A C H I N I Æ.

H E R C U L E S.

Wou'd she had fall'n by mine!

H Y L L U S.

Alas! my father,
Did'st thou know all, thy anger wou'd be chang'd
To pity for her.

H E R C U L E S.

That were strange indeed;
Why dost thou think so?

H Y L L U S.

She did mean thee well,
But err'd unknowing.

H E R C U L E S.

Mean't she well to slay
Thy father?

H Y L L U S.

Thy new marriage was the cause:
She had prepar'd a philtre for thy love,
And knew not 'twas a poison.

H E R C U L E S.

But, say, who
So skill'd in magic arts at Trachis here
Cou'd give her this?

H Y L L U S.

The savage centaur Nessus,

Who

Who did persuade her 'twould restore thy love
Giv'n to another wife.

H E R C U L E S.

Undone Alcides!

I dye, my child; there is no life for me;
Alas! I see it now; I see my woes;
Hyllus, away, thy father is no more;
Begone, and call thy brothers, call Alcmena,
The wife, alas! in vain, the wife of Jove;
Go, bring them here, that with my latest breath
I may declare my fate long since foretold
By oracles divine.

H Y L L U S.

Alcmena's gone

To Tyrinth; with her many of thy sons
Remain; some dwell at Thebes, the rest are here,
And wait with me to hear, and to obey thee.

H E R C U L E S.

Then listen to me, for the time is come
When thou must prove thyself indeed my son;
Know, Jove, my heav'nly fire, long since foretold
I was not born to perish by the hand

Of

To Tyrinth. Tyrinth or Tyrinthia was a city in the neighbourhood of Argos.

Of living man, but from some habitant
 Of Pluto's dark abode shou'd meet my fate ;
 The centaur Nessus (so was it fulfill'd)
 Though dead destroy'd me : but I'll tell thee more,
 New oracles confirm'd the old, for know
 When to the Selli's sacred grove I came,
 (The wand'ring priests who o'er the mountains roam,
 And rest their weary'd limbs on the cold ground)
 An antient oak prophetic did declare
 That if I liv'd to this decisive hour,
 Here all my labours, all my toils shou'd end :
 I thought it told me I shou'd live in peace ;
 Alas ! it only meant that I must dye,
 For death will put an end to ev'ry care.
 Since thus it is, my son, thou too must join
 To ease Alcides ; let me not reproach thee,
 But yield thy willing aid, nor e'er forget
 The best of laws, obedience to a father.

HYLLUS.

Of living man. The original is *πνεοντος μηδενος*, which literally translated answers exactly to our common expression, 'no man breathing;' but this is too low and familiar for tragedy: it is observable that there is a strong resemblance between the oracles of antiquity, and the witches of modern times: we cannot read the passage before us without recollecting a parallel one in Shakespear, where he makes his witches foretell

'That none of woman born should slay Macbeth ;'
 which is accomplish'd by it's proving afterwards that Duncan

'Was from his mother's womb untimely rip'd,'
 in the same manner as Hercules fell by the artifice of Nessus, long after his death.

H Y L L U S.

Thy words affright me ; but declare thy purpose ;
Behold me ready to perform thy orders
Whate'er they be.

H E R C U L E S.

First give me then thy hand.

H Y L L U S.

But why this pledge, and wherefore anxious thus
Dost thou require it?

H E R C U L E S.

Wilt thou give it me,

Or dost refuse ?

H Y L L U S.

There, take it ; I obey.

H E R C U L E S.

First swear then by the head of Jove my fire.

H Y L L U S.

I will ; but what ?

H E R C U L E S.

Swear that thou wilt perform

All I enjoin thee.

H Y L L U S.

Bear me witness, Jove !

I swear.

H E R-

H E R C U L E S.

And imprecate the wrath divine
If thou perform'st it not.

H Y L L U S.

I shall not fail ;
But, if I do, may vengeance swift o'ertake me.

H E R C U L E S.

Thou know'st the top of Oeta's sacred hill.

H Y L L U S.

I know it well, and many a sacrifice
Have offer'd there.

H E R C U L E S.

That is the destin'd place,
Where thou, assisted by thy chosen friends,
My son, must bear the body of Alcides ;
There shalt thou cut thee many a leafy branch
From the wild olive and deep-rooted oak,
Then cast me on it, take thy torch, and light
My fun'ral pile ; without one tear or groan
Unmanly do it, if thou art my son ;
For if thou fail'st, remember, after death
A father's curses will sit heavy on thee.

H Y L L U S.

Alas ! my father, what hast thou commanded ?

What

What haft thou bade me do?

H E R C U L E S.

What muft be done,

Or thou art not the fon of Hercules.

H Y L L U S.

A dreadful deed! and muft I then become

A parricide, and murther thee?

H E R C U L E S.

O! no!

My kind phyfician, balm of all my woes.

H Y L L U S.

Myfelf to caft thee in the flames! is that

An office fit for me?

H E R C U L E S.

If that alone

Seem dreadful to thee, yet perform the reft.

H Y L L U S.

I'll bear thee thither.

H E R C U L E S.

Wilt thou raife the pile?

H Y L L U S.

I will do any thing but be myfelf

Thy executioner.

HERCULES.

'Tis well, my son :

But one thing more, and I am fatisfy'd ;

'Tis but a little.

H Y L L U S :

Be it e'er fo great,

I fhall obey.

HERCULES.

Thou know'ft the virgin daughter

Of Eurytus.

H Y L L U S .

Iole ?

HERCULES.

Her, my fon ;

Remember, 'tis a father's laft command,

And thou haft fworn obedience ; that Iole

I do bequeath thee ; take her to thy arms

When I am dead, and let her be thy wife :

It

Take her to thy arms. It muft be acknowledged that the request of Hercules is of a very extraordinary nature : the fon is desired, or rather commanded to marry his father's mistress, and this, not to shield her from the resentment of the injured mother now dead, but only, as it should seem, that so valuable a treasure should not go out of the family. Hyllus remonstrates against it, but in vain, and at last gives his father a promise of consent, which we do not however remember to have read that he ever perform'd. Racine is supposed by Brumoy to have copied this incident in his Mithridate, though with some difference in the circumstance, his son being represented as an admirer of his father's mistress, and therefore well prepared to receive the legacy.

It is not fitting she who lay by th' side
 Of Hercules to any but the son
 Of Hercules shou'd e'er descend; to thee
 Alone I yield her: speak not, but obey me;
 After thy kind compliance to refuse
 So slight a favour were to cancel all.

H Y L L U S. [aside.]

Alas! distemper'd as he is, to chide him
 Were most unkind; and yet, what madness this!

H E R C U L E S.

Thou wilt not do it then?

H Y L L U S.

What! marry her,
 Who slew my mother! her, who hath brought thee
 To this sad state! it were an act of phrenzy:
 Death be my portion, rather than to live
 With those I hate.

H E R C U L E S. [turning to the chorus.]

He will not pay me then
 The duty which he owes a dying father:
 But if thou dost not, curses from the gods
 Await thee.

Y 2

H Y L L U S.

Who lay by th' side of Hercules. This is a literal translation of the original
 " εμοις πλευροισ κλιθεισαν," and answers exactly to our own idiom,

" She might lay by th' side of an emperor, and command him tasks."
 Shakespear's Othello.

H Y L L U S.

O! thou rav'ft; it is the rage
Of thy diftemper makes thee talk fo wildly.

H E R C U L E S.

Thou haft awaken'd all my woes; again
They torture now.

H Y L L U S.

Alas! what doubts arife,
What fears perplex me!

H E R C U L E S.

Mean'ft thou to difpute
A father's will?

H Y L L U S.

Muft I then learn of thee
To do a wicked deed?

H E R C U L E S.

It is not wicked,
If I request it of thee.

H Y L L U S.

Is it juft?

H E R C U L E S.

It is; the gods are witneffes 'tis juft.

H Y L L U S.

Then by thofe gods I fwear, I will perform

What

What thou command'st: I never can be deem'd
Or base, or impious, for obeying thee.

H E R C U L E S.

'Tis well, my son; one added kindness more,
And I am satisfy'd: before the racks
Of dire convulsion, and the pangs of madness
Again attack me, throw me on the pile.
Haste then, and bear me to it, there at last
I shall have peace, and rest from all my sorrows.

H Y L L U S.

Since 'tis thy will, my father, we submit.

H E R C U L E S.

Now, e'er the dreadful malady return,
Be firm, my soul, ev'n as the harden'd steel;
Suspend thy cries, and meet the fatal blow
With joy and pleasure; bear me hence, my friends,
For you have shewn yourselves my friends indeed,
And prov'd the base ingratitude of those
From whom I sprang, the cruel gods, who saw
Unmov'd the woes of their unhappy son.
'Tis not in mortal to foresee his fate;
Mine is to them disgraceful, and to me
Most terrible, to me of all mankind
The most distress'd, the poor, the lost Alcides.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Iole, come not forth, unhappy virgin,
 Already hast thou seen enough of woe,
 And yet fresh sorrows wait thee; but remember,
 All is decreed, and all the work of Jove.

Iole, &c. Iole, we must suppose, is coming on the stage, anxious to know the fate of Hercules, but is stop'd by the chorus, and prevented from being a witness of the melancholy scene. Hercules is led out by Hyllus, who had promised to accompany him to mount OËta, where he expired.

||||| This tragedy gave rise to the Hercules Furens of Seneca, and the Hercule Mourant of Rotrou; they who will take the trouble to peruse these imperfect copies of Sophocles, will easily perceive how much the Latin and French poets have deviated from the simplicity and beauty of the original.

F I N I S.



OE D I P U S

T Y R A N N U S.



Dramatis Personæ.

OE D I P U S, king of Thebes,

J O C A S T A, wife of OEdipus,

C R E O N, brother to Jocasta,

T I R E S I A S, a blind prophet of Thebes,

A S H E P H E R D from Corinth,

A M E S S E N G E R,

A N O L D S H E P H E R D, formerly belonging to Laius,

H I G H P R I E S T of Jupiter,

C H O R U S

Composed of the PRIESTS and ANTIENT MEN of Thebes, Theban YOUTHS,

CHILDREN of OEdipus, ATTENDANTS, &c.

S C E N E

Thebes, before the palace of OEdipus.

OE D I P U S
T Y R A N N U S.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

OE D I P U S, H I G H P R I E S T of Jupiter.

OE D I P U S.

O! My lov'd fons, the youthful progeny
• Of antient Cadmus, wherefore fit you here

V O L. II.

Z

And

It is scarce possible to conceive any thing more solemn and magnificent than the opening of this tragedy; in the front of the scene is the palace of OEdipus; before it, an altar erected to him; at the foot of which, we see a number of young men of the first quality in Thebes, with boughs of supplication in their hands, and prostrate on the earth; with them the High-Priest of Jupiter, and a little behind, several other priests and old men, as preparing for a sacrifice; beyond them we have a distant view of the two temples of Minerva, with their altars, and a large concourse of people standing round them, seeming, by various acts of worship, to deprecate the general calamity; the scenery and decorations, necessary on this occasion, account in some measure for the otherwise incredible expence which the Athenians are said to have been at, in the representation of this piece.

O! my lov'd fons, &c. OEdipus, alarm'd at the groans and lamentations of his people thronging to the altar, comes out of his palace to enquire into the cause

And suppliant thus, with sacred boughs adorn'd,
 Croud to our altars? frequent sacrifice,
 And pray'rs and sighs and sorrows fill the land.
 I cou'd have sent to learn the fatal cause;
 But see, your anxious sov'reign comes himself
 To know it all from you; behold your king,
 Renowned OEdipus; do thou, old man,
 For best that office suits thy years, inform me,
 Why you are come; is it the present ill
 That calls you here, or dread of future woe?
 Hard were indeed the heart that did not feel

For

cause of their distress; this humanity and tenderness recommend his character to the audience, and naturally excite that pity and compassion which the poet intends to raise for his succeeding misfortunes; he calls his subjects the progeny of Cadmus, who was the founder of Thebes, about two hundred years before his time.

With sacred boughs adorn'd. When prayers and supplications were to be made, either in the temples or other places, the petitioners carry'd boughs in their hands, bound round with fillets of white wool; this was always look'd on as a mark of distress, which entitled them to a peculiar regard, render'd their persons sacred, and protected them from all violence; it is not improbable, but that this custom among the Greeks was borrow'd from the Jews, whom we find carrying boughs on solemn festivals. See Macchab. Chap, 13.

Renowned OEdipus. Dacier observes in this place, that OEdipus's mention of himself answers the double purpose, of making his person known to the spectators on his first entrance, and at the same time conveying to them an idea of his character as proud and self-sufficient; the latter of these reasons, ascribed by Dacier, may perhaps appear unnecessary to those who are acquainted with the manners and genius of antiquity; the heroes of Homer and Virgil, we may remember, make no scruple of boasting their own abilities and perfections; Sophocles therefore wants no excuse for talking the same language.

For grief like yours, and pity such distress:
 If there be aught, that OEdipus can do
 To serve his people, know me for your friend.

P R I E S T.

O! king, thou see'st what numbers throng thy altars;
 Here, bending sad beneath the weight of years,
 The hoary priests, here croud the chosen youth
 Of Thebes, with these a weak and suppliant train
 Of helpless infants, last in me behold
 The minister of Jove: far off thou see'st
 Assembled multitudes, with laurel crown'd,
 To where Minerva's hallow'd temples rise
 Frequent repair, or where Ismenus laves
 Apollo's sacred shrine: too well thou know'st,
 Thy wretched Thebes, with dreadful storms oppress'd,
 Scarce lifts her head above the whelming flood;
 The teeming earth her blasted harvest mourns,
 And on the barren plain the flocks and herds
 Unnumber'd perish; dire abortion thwarts
 The mother's hopes, and painful she brings forth

Z 2

The

Thy wretched Thebes &c. This short but pathetic description of the plague at Thebes cannot be sufficiently admired: the poetical image of the fiery god stalking over the city, and Pluto's growing rich with the groans of the dying men, must strike every feeling heart; perhaps the beauty and simplicity of this passage will best appear by comparing it with the tinsel refinements of Seneca, and the wild rants of our own madman Lee, on the same subject.

The half-form'd infant; baleful pestilence
 Hath laid our city waste, the fiery god
 Stalks o'er deserted Thebes; whilst with our groans
 Enrich'd, the gloomy god of Erebus
 Triumphant smiles: O! OEdipus, to thee
 We bend; behold these youths, with me they kneel,
 And suppliant at thy altars sue for aid,
 To thee the first of men, and only less
 Than them whose favour thou alone can'st gain,
 The gods above; thy wisdom yet may heal
 The deep-felt wounds, and make the pow'rs divine
 Propitious to us: Thebes long since to thee
 Her safety ow'd, when from the Sphynx deliver'd
 Thy grateful people saw thee, not by man

But

From the Sphynx deliver'd. The story of the Sphynx, from the variety of accounts handed down to us concerning it, is almost as much a riddle to us as it was to OEdipus: the Sphynx, according to poetical history, was a monster with the face of a woman, wings of a bird, body of a dog, and claws like a lion; she dwelt near Thebes, and every day destroy'd many people; the oracle declared that she could never be conquer'd, till some one was found that could expound a certain riddle, or anigma, which she proposed. After many unsuccessful attempts OEdipus came, and explain'd it; the Sphynx was destroy'd; the nation deliver'd, and OEdipus rewarded for it with the kingdom of Thebes; some authors interpret the Sphynx into a maritime force, invading Bœotia under the command of a woman, whom OEdipus slew; others pretend that the Sphynx was a natural daughter of Laius, who slew all those Thebans, who dared to mention an oracle of Apollo, said to have been given to Cadmus, concerning the succession to the throne, and declaring bastards incapable of inheriting it; the fable says, that she defy'd them to produce this oracle; but that it was reveal'd to OEdipus in a dream, who repeated it publicly, and destroy'd his sister.

But by the gods instructed, save the land ;
Now then, thou best of kings, assist us now,
O! by some mortal or immortal aid
Now succour the distress'd! on wisdom oft
And prudent counsels, in the hour of ill,
Success awaits ; O! dearest prince, support,
Relieve thy Thebes, on thee its saviour once
Again it calls ; now, if thou woud'st not see
The mem'ry perish of thy former deeds,
Let it not call in vain, but rise, and save.
With happiest omens once and fair success
We saw thee crown'd ; O! be thyself again,
And may thy will and fortune be the same!
If thou art yet to reign, O! king, remember
A soveraign's riches is a peopled realm ;
For what will ships or lofty tow'rs avail
Unarm'd with men to guard and to defend them?

O E D I P U S.

O! my unhappy sons, too well I know
Your sad estate ; I know the woes of Thebes ;
And yet amongst you lives not such a wretch
As OEdipus ; for O! on me, my children,
Your sorrows press ; alas! I feel for you
My people, for myself, for Thebes, for all ;

Think

Think not, I slept regardless of your ills;
 O! no, with many a tear I wept your fate
 And oft in meditation deep resolv'd
 How best your peace and safety to restore:
 The only med'cine that my thoughts cou'd find
 I have administer'd, Menœceus' son,
 The noble Creon, went by my command
 To Delphos, from Apollo's shrine to know
 What must be done to save this wretched land;
 'Tis time he were return'd; I wonder much
 At his delay; if, when he comes, your king
 Perform not all the God enjoyns, then say
 He is the worst of men.

P R I E S T.

O! king, thy words
 Are gracious, and if right these youths inform me,
 Creon is here.

OE D I P U S,

O! Phœbus, grant he come
 With tidings chearful as the smile he wears!

P R I E S T.

He is the messenger of good; for see,

His brows are crown'd with laurel.

O E D I P U S.

We shall soon

Be satisfy'd: he comes.

S C E N E II.

C R E O N, O E D I P U S, P R I E S T, C H O R U S.

O E D I P U S.

My dearest Creon,

O! say, what answer bear'st thou from the God,
Or good, or ill?

C R E O N,

Good, very good; for know,
The worst of ills, if rightly used, may prove
The means of happiness.

O E D I P U S.

What says my friend?

This answer gives me nought to hope or fear.

C R E O N.

Shall we retire, or wou'd you that I speak
In public here?

O E D I P U S.

His brows are crown'd with laurel. It was usual for those who, on consulting the oracle of Delphos, had received a favourable answer, to put on a crown of laurel at their return, in token of their success: Creon had reason to look upon his in that light, as it pointed out an immediate remedy for the evil: the sight of the laurel therefore raises the hopes of OEdipus, and consequently heightens his disappointment afterwards. Sophocles throughout this excellent piece appears like a fine painter, whose judicious mixture and disposition of light and shade animates and enlivens the picture.

OE D I P U S.

Before them all declare it;

Their woes fit heavier on me than my own.

C R E O N.

Then mark what I have heard: the God commands
That instant we drive forth the fatal cause
Of this dire pestilence, nor nourish here
Th' accursed monster.

OE D I P U S.

Who? what monster? how

Remove it?

C R E O N.

Or by banishment, or death;

Life must be giv'n for life; for yet his blood
Rests on the city.

OE D I P U S.

Whose? what means the God?

C R E O N.

O! king, before thee Laius rul'd o'er Thebes.

OE D I P U S.

I know he did, though I did ne'er behold him.

C R E O N.

Laius was slain, and on his murderers,
So Phœbus says, we must have vengeance.

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

Where,

Where are the murth'ers? who shall trace the guilt
Bury'd so long in silence?

C R E O N.

Here, he said,

Ev'n in this land: what's sought for may be found,
But truth unsearch'd for, seldom comes to light.

O E D I P U S.

How did he fall, and where? at home, abroad,
Dy'd he at Thebes, or in a foreign land?

V O L. II.

A a

C R E O N.

How did he fall? This, Dacier thinks, is the only objection that can be made to the fable of OEdipus, and which is, in his opinion, insuperable: Aristotle had previously affirm'd it to be absolutely necessary, that among all the incidents which compose the fable, no one should be without reason; or, if that be impossible, it ought to be so managed, that what is without reason should be always out of the tragedy; as Sophocles has prudently observed in his OEdipus. It was without reason (says Dacier in his comment on this passage of Aristotle) that OEdipus should be so long marry'd to Jocasta, and not know in what manner Laius was kill'd, or make enquiry after the murderers; but as the subject could not subsist without this circumstance, Sophocles has judiciously placed it out of the action: the poet is answerable only for those incidents, which make a part in his subject, and not for those which precede or follow it. Brumoy is of the same opinion with Dacier, and says it is 'un defect visible, quoique necessaire,' 'a visible though a necessary fault,' that Aristotle therefore has endeavour'd to excuse Sophocles as well as he could.

If I had leisure and inclination to turn commentator on this passage before us, I cannot but think it were an easy task, in opposition to the arbitrary decision both of Greek and French critics, to defend Sophocles, and to prove that there is no such glaring absurdity in the supposition of OEdipus's real or pretended ignorance on this occasion: was it the business of OEdipus, of a stranger, who by a lucky concurrence of circumstances was just raised to a throne which he had

C R E O N.

He left his palace, fame reports, to seek
Some oracle; since that, we ne'er beheld him.

OE D I P U S.

But did no messenger return? not one
Of all his train, of whom we might enquire,
Touching this murder?

C R E O N.

One, and one alone,
Came back, who, flying, 'scaped the gen'ral slaughter;
But nothing, save one little circumstance,
Or knew, or e'er related.

OE D I P U S.

What was that?

Much

had no right to, to inspect too narrowly into the murder of his predecessor, whom he thought no ways related to him? To make public enquiry might only have raised public commotions; and as to the private intelligence, which he might have had from Jocasta, it was certainly a subject too delicate to be touch'd on when they first came together, and of very little consequence afterwards: it might indeed be the business of the people, and doubtless would have been, but for a circumstance which seems to have escaped Aristotle and his followers, and is notwithstanding an obvious reason for their silence in this particular: we are told, a few lines below, that the Thebans made no enquiry into the murder of Laius, because their attention was otherwise employ'd.

The Sphinx,

Her dire ænigma kept our thoughts intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.

This kept every thing quiet for a time, till the affair by degrees naturally sunk into oblivion.

Much may be learn'd from that: a little dawn
Of light appearing may discover all.

C R E O N.

Laius, attack'd by robbers, and oppress'd
By numbers, fell; such is his tale.

O E D I P U S.

Wou'd they,
Wou'd robbers do so desperate a deed,
Unbrib'd and unassisted?

C R E O N.

So indeed
Suspicion whisper'd then; but, Laius dead,
No friend was found to vindicate the wrong.

O E D I P U S.

But what strange cause cou'd stop enquiry thus
Into the murder of a king?

C R E O N.

The Sphynx,
Her dire ænigma kept our thoughts intent
On present ills, nor gave us time to search
The past mysterious deed.

A a 2

O E D I P U S.

Oppress'd by numbers. This proves afterwards not to be true; for OEdipus was alone when he kill'd Laius; the servant notwithstanding might be supposed to have related the story in this manner, to excuse his own cowardice, and save the honour of his master. This falsehood was necessary to the carrying on of the plot, which would otherwise have been too soon unravell'd.

OE D I P U S.

Myself will try
 Soon to unveil it; thou, Apollo, well,
 And well hast thou, my Creon, lent thy aid;
 Your OEdipus shall now perform his part;
 Yes, I will fight for Phœbus and my country,
 And so I ought; for not to friends alone
 Or kindred owe I this, but to myself:
 Who murder'd him perchance wou'd murder me;
 His cause is mine: wherefore, my children, rise,
 Take hence your suppliant boughs, and summon here
 The race of Cadmus, my assembled people;
 Nought shall be left untry'd: Apollo leads,
 And we will rise to joy or sink for ever.

P R I E S T.

Haste then, my sons; for this we hither came;
 About it quick, and may the god, who sent
 This oracle, protect, defend, and save us.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

Myself will try &c. Nothing could be better design'd than thus making OEdipus a principal agent in the discovery of his own guilt: every method, which he makes use of to promote his ease and safety, tends to his misery and destruction; he endeavours only to find out the murderer of his wife's first husband; that husband proves to be his own father, and himself the murderer of that father; the whole is truly tragical.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

O! thou, great oracle divine,
Who didst to happy Thebes remove

From

Chorus. The critics are much divided in opinion concerning the persons who compose the chorus of this tragedy. The antient Greek scholiast assures us that the moment the high-priest of Jupiter, with his attendant train of young men, leave the stage at the end of the last scene, a certain number of the inhabitants of Thebes enter and form the chorus; with this opinion of the scholiast, Mr. Boivin partly agrees; and only adds, that the chorus consisted of the whole body of the people, who, impatient to hear the answer of the oracle, had assembled together, and crowded towards the palace; that the principal citizens take their places on the stage, and speak by their choragus or chief, the rest standing at some distance: in support of this assertion Mr. Boivin produces several arguments; the most forcible of which is, that OEdipus, in his address to the chorus, calls them the citizens of Thebes and descendants of Cadmus: Mr. Dacier on the other hand affirms, that on the departure of the high-priest, the other priests and sacrificers, who remain on the stage, compose the chorus, which is afterwards join'd by the people, whom OEdipus had commanded to assemble, and who could not possibly have been got together so quickly as to enter and make a chorus immediately, according to Boivin: it is much more natural, he says, to suppose that the priests belonging to the several temples, the *ἑὶ συν ἡγήσατο ἄρχεις*, who had heard the conversation between OEdipus and Creon, should join in their invocation to Apollo, requesting him to explain the oracle, and deliver their country. Those, who are desirous of entering more minutely into the arguments brought by these gentlemen on both sides of the question, will meet with a summary account of it in the *Histoire de l'Academie des inscriptions & Belles Lettres* Tom. 3. p. 108. Brumoy sides with the scholiast and Boivin, and gives the chorus the title of antient Thebans; alledging only as his reason, that Jocasta calls them *χωρῶν ἀνακτες* 'Princes, or, men of the first rank, in Thebes,' which perhaps might be applied with equal propriety to the priests.

The learned Dr. Burton, whose *Πενταλογία* is just come to my hands, has given us, in his excellent and useful notes on the OEdipus Tyrannus, an opinion in some measure differing from, and perhaps preferable to all the rest: he imagines that OEdipus, the high priest, &c. retiring, the stage is left in possession of the priests, who form the chorus and sing the first song or intermede during the absence

From Delphi's golden shrine,
 And in sweet sounds declare the will of Jove;
 Daughter of hope, O! sooth my soul to rest,
 And calm the rising tumult in my breast;
 Look down, O! Phœbus, on thy lov'd abode;
 Speak, for thou know'st the dark decrees of fate,
 Our present and our future state,
 O! Delian, be thou still our healing God!

A N T I S-

absence of the king, who returns soon after together with the assembled people; that then the priests go out and give place to a new chorus, composed of the principal citizens of Thebes, who continue on the stage to the end of the drama. This solution of the difficulty is ingenious, but seems to want that kind of confirmation which arises from similitude of practice in the same author: we do not remember any instance in Sophocles of the like conduct with regard to his chorus. The Dr. indeed says, examples are not wanting, and mentions the hymn to Apollo in the Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides, as a similar circumstance; but, besides that the cases are not exactly parallel, it may be sufficient to observe that the conduct of Euripides should by no means determine that of Sophocles, who is infinitely more correct and regular in the plan and disposition of every part of his tragedies, than his illustrious rival. If, after the ingenious conjectures of these gentlemen, I were to propose my own on this point, it would be, that the same chorus continues from the beginning to the end, and that it consisted of the priests and sacrificers, intermingled with the principal and most ancient inhabitants of Thebes.

O! thou, great oracle &c. The first intermede or song of the chorus is a solemn invocation of Apollo and other deities, intreating them to succour Thebes, and pathetically describing the dreadful effects of the pestilence. The whole is, in the original, nobly express'd, and naturally arising from the circumstances of the drama.

The will of Jove. The oracle of Apollo only interpreted the will of Jove, the great father and source of all.

Quæ Phœbo pater omnipotens mihi Phœbus Apollo
 Prædixit,

says Virgil. Absurd as the pagan theology was, we frequently find the antients resolving all power into one supreme being, call'd, particularly in Sophocles, by the name of 'Θεός, or the God.'

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Minerva, first on thee I call,
 Daughter of Jove, immortal maid,
 Low beneath thy feet we fall,
 O! bring thy sister Dian to our aid;
 Goddess of Thebes, from thy imperial throne
 Look with an eye of gentle pity down,
 And thou, far-shooting Phœbus, once the friend
 Of this unhappy, this devoted land,
 O! now if ever let thy hand
 Once more be stretch'd to save and to defend!

S T R O P H E II.

Great Thebes, my sons, is now no more,
 She falls and ne'er again shall rise,
 Nought can her health or strength restore,
 The mighty nation sinks, she droops, she dies:
 Strip'd of her fruits behold the barren earth;
 The half-form'd infant struggles for a birth;
 The mother sinks unequal to her pain:
 Whilst quick as birds in airy circles fly,
 Or lightnings from an angry sky,
 Crouds press on crouds to Pluto's dark domain.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Behold what heaps of wretches slain,
 Unbury'd; unlamented lye,

Nor parents now nor friends remain
 To grace their deaths with pious obsequy ;
 The aged matron and the blooming wife,
 Clung to the altars, sue for added life ;
 With sighs and groans united Pæans rise ;
 Re-echo'd still does great Apollo's name
 Their sorrows and their wants proclaim,
 Frequent to him ascends the sacrifice.

S T R O P H E III.

Haste then, Minerva, beauteous maid,
 Descend in this afflictive hour,
 Haste to thy dying people's aid,
 Drive hence this baneful, this destructive pow'r !
 Who comes not arm'd with hostile sword or shield,
 Yet strews with many a corse th' ensanguin'd field ;
 To Amphitrite's wide-extending bed
 O! drive him, Goddess, from thy fav'rite land,
 Or let him, by thy dread command,
 Bury in Thracian waves his ignominious head.

A N T I S T R O P H E III.

Father of all, immortal Jove,
 O! now thy fiery terrors send ;
 From thy dreadful stores above
 Let lightnings blast him and let thunders rend ;

And

T Y R A N N U S. 193

And thou, O! Lydian king, thy aid impart;
 Send from thy golden bow, th'unerring dart;
 Smile, chaste Diana, on this lov'd abode,
 Whilst Theban Bacchus joins the mad'ning throng,
 O! God of wine and mirth and song,
 Now with thy torch destroy the base inglorious god.

[Exeunt.

With thy torch, &c. Bacchus is always described with torches; probably in remembrance of his birth, as being born in flames, when his mother Semele was consumed by Jove's lightning. We read of 'the λαμπτηρια εορτη, or feast 'of torches,' dedicated to this god. Dacier imagines that the chorus invoke Bacchus with his torches, because wine and fire are the best preservatives against the plague: but this seems to be a mere allegorical and visionary refinement.

End of A C T I.

OE D I P U S, C H O R U S, the People assembled.

OE D I P U S.

Y O U R pray'rs are heard; and, if you will obey
 Your king, and hearken to his words, you soon
 Shall find relief; myself will heal your woes:
 I was a stranger to the dreadful deed,
 A stranger ev'n to the report till now;
 And yet without some traces of the crime
 I shou'd not urge this matter; therefore hear me;
 I speak to all the citizens of Thebes,
 Myself a citizen; observe me well:
 If any know the murtherer of Laius,
 Let him reveal it; I command you all;
 But if restrain'd by dread of punishment
 He hide the secret, let him fear no more;
 For nought but exile shall attend the crime
 Whene'er confess'd; if by a foreign hand
 The horrid deed was done, who points him out
 Commands our thanks, and meets a sure reward;
 But if there be who knows the murtherer,
 And yet conceals him from us, mark his fate

Which

Which here I do pronounce: let none receive
 Throughout my kingdom, none hold converse with him,
 Nor offer pray'r, nor sprinkle o'er his head
 The sacred cup; let him be driv'n from all,
 By all abandon'd, and by all accurs'd,
 For so the delphic oracle declar'd;
 And therefore to the gods I pay this duty
 And to the dead: O! may the guilty wretch,
 Whether alone, or by his impious friends
 Assisted, he perform'd the horrid deed,
 Deny'd the common benefits of nature,
 Wear out a painful life! and O! if here,
 Within my palace, I conceal the traitor,
 On me and mine alight the vengeful curse!
 To you my people, I commit the care

B b 2

Of

Let none receive &c. Sophocles has here given us the solemn form of a pagan excommunication, almost as terrible in its circumstances as a pope's bull; this we find was frequently denounced against those who were guilty of murder, or any other very heinous crime: the antients believed that nothing could prevent or turn aside such execrations,

—————*dira detestatio*

Nullâ expiatur victimâ.

Hor. b. 5. od. 5.

We may judge, therefore, what effect this curse must have had on a superstitious people, when deliver'd by their sovereign, and how great their horror and astonishment, when he himself becomes the unhappy object of it.

Nor sprinkle o'er his head &c. Before the sacrifice, it was customary for those, who partook of it, to wash their hands together in the lustral water, with which they were afterwards sprinkled by the priests, by way of purification: to be denied this, was always consider'd as a mark of guilt and infamy.

Of this important business; 'tis my cause,
 The cause of heav'n, and your expiring country ;
 Ev'n if the god had nought declar'd, to leave
 This crime unexpiated were most ungrateful;
 He was the best of kings, the best of men;
 That scepter now is mine which Laius bore ;
 His wife is mine; so would his children be
 Did any live; and therefore am I bound,
 Ev'n as he were my father, to revenge him:
 Yes, I will try to find this murtherer,
 I owe it to the son of Labdacus,
 To Polydorus, Cadmus, and the race
 Of great Agenor: O! if yet there are,
 Who will not join me in the pious deed,
 From such may earth withhold her annual store,
 And barren be their bed, their life most wretched,
 And their death cruel as the pestilence
 That wastes our city! but on you, my Thebans,

Who

So had his children been &c. By this, the poet means to inform us, that Laius had no other children by Jocasta but OEdipus: it seems indeed essential to this fable, with regard to the constitution of the drama, that it should be so, for reasons sufficiently obvious. Corneille, one of the many unsuccessful followers of Sophocles in this subject, has, notwithstanding, given Laius a daughter by Jocasta, whom he calls Dirce, and makes Theseus in love with her: in the preface to his OEdipus, we find a defence of this episode, which to the judicious reader, will yet appear absolutely indefensible.

Who wish us fair success, may justice smile
Propitious, and the gods for ever bless.

C H O R U S.

O! king, thy imprecations unappal'd
I hear, and join thee, guiltless of the crime
Nor knowing who committed it; the god
Alone, who gave the oracle, must clear
Its doubtful sense, and point out the offender.

O E D I P U S.

'Tis true; but who shall force the pow'rs divine
To speak their hidden purpose?

C H O R U S.

One thing more,

If I might speak.

O E D I P U S.

Say on, whate'er thy mind
Shall dictate to thee.

C H O R U S.

As amongst the gods.

All-knowing Phœbus, so to mortal men

Doth

Say on &c. In the original, the chorus says, 'let me give you a second
'advice,' to which OEdipus replies, 'if you have a third, don't omit it.'
This puts one in mind of Hamlet's odd reply to Rosencraus, 'we shall obey,
'were she ten times our mother.' Expressions so uncommon, and purely
idiomatical, will not admit of a literal translation; I have therefore, in this
passage, varied the phrase, and retain'd only the most probable meaning of it.

Doth sage Tiresias in foreknowledge sure
Shine forth preeminent ; perchance his aid
Might much avail us.

OE D I P U S.

Creon did suggest
The same expedient, and by his advice
Twice have I sent for this Tiresias ; much
I wonder that he comes not.

C H O R U S.

'Tis most fitting
We do consult him ; for the idle tales
Which rumour spreads are not to be regarded.

OE D I P U S.

What are those tales ? for nought shou'd we despise.

C H O R U S.

'Tis said, some trav'lers did attack the king.

OE D I P U S.

It is ; but still no proof appears.

C H O R U S.

And yet,
If it be so, thy dreadful execration
Will force the guilty to confess.

OE D I P U S.

By his advice. This circumstance is artfully thrown in by the poet, as it lays a foundation for the suspicions of OEdipus against Creon, and prepares the spectators for the ensuing quarrel between them.

O E D I P U S.

O! no!

Who fears not to commit the crime will ne'er
Be frighted at the curse that follows it.

C H O R U S.

Behold he comes, who will discover all,
The holy prophet, see! they lead him hither;
He knows the truth and will reveal it to us.

S C E N E II.

T I R E S I A S, O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

O E D I P U S.

O! sage Tiresias, thou who knowest all
That can be known, the things of heav'n above
And earth below, whose mental eye beholds,
Blind as thou art, the state of dying Thebes,
And weeps her fate, to thee we look for aid,
On thee alone for safety we depend:
This answer, which perchance thou hast not heard,
Apollo gave; the plague, he said, shou'd cease,
When those who murder'd Laius were discover'd,

And

Blind as thou art. The antients give us various accounts of the cause of Tiresias's blindness. Ovid, who is perhaps the best poetical authority, tells us, that Tiresias, being appointed by Jupiter and Juno to decide a difference between them, gave his opinion in favour of the former; upon which, the enraged Juno deprived him of his sight; and Jupiter, to make him amends, bestow'd on him the gift of prophecy.

And paid the forfeit of their crime by death,
 Or banishment: O! do not then conceal
 Aught that thy art prophetic from the flight
 Of birds or other omens may disclose;
 O! save thyself, save this afflicted city,
 Save OEdipus, avenge the guiltless dead
 From this pollution! thou art all our hope;
 Remember 'tis the privilege of man,
 His noblest function, to assist the wretched.

T I R E S I A S.

Alas! what misery it is to know,
 When knowledge is thus fatal! O! Tiresias,
 Thou art undone! wou'd I had never came!

OE D I P U S.

What say'st thou? whence this strange dejection? speak.

T I R E S I A S.

Let me be gone; 'twere better for us both
 That I retire in silence; be advised.

OE D I P U S.

It is ingratitude to Thebes who bore
 And cherish'd thee, it is unjust to all,
 To hide the will of heav'n.

T I R E S I A S.

'Tis rash in thee

To ask, and rash I fear will prove my answer:

C H O R U S.

O! do not, by the gods, conceal it from us,
Suppliant we all request, we all conjure thee.

T I R E S I A S.

You know not what you ask; I'll not unveil
Your mis'ries to you.

O E D I P U S.

Know'st thou then our fate,
And wilt not tell it? mean'st thou to betray
Thy country and thy king?

T I R E S I A S.

I wou'd not make

Myself and thee unhappy; why thus blame
My tender care, nor listen to my caution?

O E D I P U S.

Wretch as thou art, thou wou'dst provoke a stone,
Inflexible and cruel, still implor'd
And still refusing.

V O L. II.

C c

T I R E S I A S.

Thou would'st provoke a stone. This is a close and literal translation of 'πετρος
'φυσω συγ' οργαρείας,' 'vel saxum irritare queas.' The unlearned reader
may probably think the expression too low and vulgar for the dignity of the
buskin: I have notwithstanding preserved it, because the phrase could not be
vary'd without departing from the original; besides that it serves, amongst many
other passages, to point out the remarkable analogy of the greek language with
our own.

T I R E S I A S.

Thou condemn'ft my warmth,
Forgetful of thy own.

OE D I P U S.

Who wou'd not rage
To fee an injur'd people treated thus
With vile contempt?

T I R E S I A S.

What is decreed by heav'n
Must come to pafs, though I reveal it not.

OE D I P U S.

Still 'tis thy duty to inform us of it.

T I R E S I A S.

I'll fpeak no more, not tho' thine anger fwell
Ev'n to its utmoft.

OE D I P U S.

Nor will I be filent.

I tell thee once for all thou wert thyfelf
Accomplice in this deed ; nay more, I think,
But for thy blindnefs, woud'ft with thy own hand
Have done it too.

T I R E S I A S.

'Tis well ; now hear Tirefias ;
The fentence, which thou didft thyfelf proclaim,

Falls on thyself; henceforth shall never man
Hold converse with thee, for thou art accurs'd
The guilty cause of all this city's woes.

O E D I P U S.

Audacious traitor, think'st thou to escape
The hand of vengeance?

T I R E S I A S.

Yes, I fear thee not;

For truth is stronger than a tyrant's arm.

O E D I P U S.

Whence didst thou learn this? was it from thy art?

T I R E S I A S.

I learn'd it from thyself; thou didst compel me
To speak, unwilling as I was.

O E D I P U S.

Once more

Repeat it then, that I may know my fate
More plainly still.

T I R E S I A S.

Is it not plain already?

C c 2

Or

Audacious traitor &c. The character of OEdipus begins now to open upon us, and display itself: we find him presumptuous, self-sufficient, resentful and suspicious; his impiety in contemning the prophet of Apollo in this scene, and his groundless accusation of Creon in the next, diminish our pity for his misfortunes, raise a proper degree of terror in the spectators, and reconcile us to his approaching fate.

Or mean'st thou but to tempt me?

OE D I P U S.

No; but say,

Speak it again.

T I R E S I A S.

Again then I declare

Thou art thy self the murth'rer whom thou seek'st.

OE D I P U S.

A second time thou shalt not pass unpunish'd.

T I R E S I A S.

What woud'st thou say, if I shou'd tell thee all?

OE D I P U S.

Say what thou wilt; for all is false.

T I R E S I A S.

Know then,

That OEdipus, in shameful bonds united

With those he loves, unconscious of his guilt,

Is yet most guilty.

OE D I P U S.

Dar'st thou utter more,

And hope for pardon?

T I R E S I A S.

Yes, if there be strength

In sacred truth.

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

But truth dwells not in thee:

Thy body and thy mind are dark alike,
For both are blind; thy ev'ry sense is lost.

T I R E S I A S.

Thou dost upbraid me with the loss of that
For which thyself e'er long shalt meet reproach
From ev'ry tongue.

O E D I P U S.

Thou blind and impious traitor!
Thy darkness is thy safeguard, or this hour
Had been thy last.

T I R E S I A S.

It is not in my fate
To fall by thee; Apollo guards his priest.

O E D I P U S.

Was this the tale of Creon, or thy own?

T I R E S I A S.

Creon is guiltless, and the crime is thine.

O E D I P U S.

O! riches, pow'r, dominion, and thou far
Above them all, the best of human blessings,
Excelling wisdom, how doth envy love
To follow and oppress you! this fair kingdom,

Which

Which by the nation's choice, and not my own,
 I here possess, Creon, my faithful friend,
 For such I thought him once, wou'd now wrest from me,
 And has suborn'd this vile impostor here,
 This wand'ring hypocrite, of sharpest sight
 When int'rest prompts, but ignorant and blind
 When fools consult him; tell me, prophet, where
 Was all thy art, when the abhorred Sphynx
 Alarm'd our city? wherefore did not then
 Thy wisdom save us? then the man divine
 Was wanting; but thy birds refus'd their omens,
 Thy god was silent; then came OEdipus,
 This poor, unlearned, uninstructed sage;
 Who not from birds uncertain omens drew,
 But by his own sagacious mind explor'd
 The hidden mystery; and now thou com'st
 To cast me from the throne my wisdom gain'd,
 And share with Creon my divided empire:
 But you shou'd both lament your ill-got pow'r,
 You and your bold compeer; for thee, this moment,
 But that I bear respect unto thy age,
 I'd make thee rue thy execrable purpose.

C H O R U S.

You both are angry, therefore both to blame;

Much

Much rather shou'd you join, with friendly zeal
 And mutual ardour, to explore the will
 Of all-deciding heav'n.

T I R E S I A S.

What though thou rul'st
 O'er Thebes despotic, we are equal here;
 I am Apollo's subject, and not thine;
 Nor want I Creon to protect me. No;
 I tell thee, king, this blind Tiresias tells thee,
 Seeing thou see'st not, know'st not where thou art,
 What, or with whom: canst thou inform me who
 Thy parents are, and what thy horrid crimes
 'Gainst thy own race, the living and the dead?
 A father's and a mother's curse attend thee;
 Soon shall their furies drive thee from the land,
 And leave thee dark like me; what mountain then,
 Or conscious shore, shall not return the groans
 Of OEdipus, and echo to his woes?
 When thou shalt look on the detested bed,
 And in that haven, where thou hope'st to rest,
 Shalt meet with storm and tempest; then what ills
 Shall fall on thee and thine! now vent thy rage

On

What mountain then. In the original, it is, what Cithæron? Cithæron was the mountain where OEdipus was exposed when an infant; this, therefore, has a remarkable propriety, but could not be express'd in the translation.

On old Tiresias, and the guiltless Creon ;
 We shall be soon aveng'd, for ne'er did heav'n
 Cut off a wretch so base, so vile as thou art.

OE D I P U S.

Must I bear this from thee? away, begone,
 Home, villain, home.

T I R E S I A S.

I did not come to thee
 Unsent for.

OE D I P U S.

Had I thought thou woud'st have thus
 Insulted me, I had not call'd thee hither.

T I R E S I A S.

Perhaps thou hold'st Tiresias as a fool,
 And madman; but thy parents thought me wise.

OE D I P U S.

My parents, said'st thou? speak, who were my parents?

T I R E S I A S.

This day, that gives thee life, shall give thee death.

OE D I P U S.

This day &c. That is, ' this day, which shall discover who thy parents are
 ' that gave thee life, shall also, by that discovery, cause thy death, when thou
 ' shalt be found the murderer of thy father: ' he tells him afterwards, that
 his virtues had undone him, which was literally true, as his wisdom in ex-
 punding the riddle of the Sphynx, and his good fortune in being saved by
 the shepherd in his infancy, gave him the opportunity of committing those
 crimes which he could otherwise never have been guilty of. The affected
 obscurity

OE D I P U S.

Still dark, and still perplexing are the words
Thou utter'ft.

T I R E S I A S.

'Tis thy bufinefs to unriddle,
And therefore thou can'ft beft interpret them.

OE D I P U S.

Thou doft reproach me for my virtues.

T I R E S I A S.

They,
And thy good fortune, have undone thee.

OE D I P U S.

Since
I fav'd the city, I'm content.

T I R E S I A S.

Farewell.

Boy, lead me hence.

OE D I P U S.

Away with him, for here
His prefence but difturbs us; being gone,
We fhall be happier.

T I R E S I A S.

OEdipus, I go,

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D d

But

obfcurity of Tiresias's predictions keeps the fpectators in a proper fufpence, and, at the fame time, throws an air of folemnity over the fcene, which renders it more interefting.

But first inform thee, for I fear thee not,
 Wherefore I came; know then, I came to tell thee,
 The man thou seek'st, the man on whom thou pour'dst
 Thy execrations, ev'n the murtherer
 Of Laius, now is here; a seeming stranger
 And yet a Theban; he shall suffer soon
 For all his crimes; from light and affluence driv'n
 To penury and darkness, poor and blind,
 Prop'd on his staff, and from his native land
 Expel'd; I see him in a foreign clime
 A helpless wand'rer; to his sons at once,
 A father, and a brother; child, and husband
 Of her from whom he sprang: adulterous,
 Incestuous parricide, now fare thee well;
 Go, learn the truth, and if it be not so,
 Say I have ne'er deserv'd the name of prophet.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

When will the guilty wretch appear,
 Whom Delphi's sacred oracle demands;

Author

When will the guilty, &c. This is the second intermede, or song of the chorus, who, divided between hope and fear, concerning the murder of Laius, express their sentiments on this occasion: their respect and veneration for the character of Tiresias, inclines them to believe him; whilst, on the other hand, their regard for OEdipus would persuade them to question the prophet's veracity; they determine therefore in favour of their sovereign, and conclude him innocent.

Author of crimes too black for mortal ear,
 Dipping in royal blood his sacrilegious hands?
 Swift as the storm by rapid whirlwinds driv'n,
 Quick let him fly th' impending wrath of heav'n;
 For lo! the angry son of Jove,
 Arm'd with red lightnings from above,
 Pursues the murth'rer with immortal hate,
 And round him spreads the snares of unrelenting fate.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

From steep Parnassus' rocky cave,
 Cover'd with snow, came forth the dread command;
 Apollo thence his sacred mandate gave,
 To search the man of blood through ev'ry land:
 Silent, and sad, the weary wand'rer roves,
 O'er pathless rocks, and solitary groves,
 Hoping to 'scape the wrath divine,
 Denounc'd from great Apollo's shrine;
 Vain hopes to 'scape the fate by heav'n decreed;
 For vengeance hovers still o'er his devoted head.

S T R O P H E II.

Tiresias, fam'd for wisdom's lore,
 Hath dreadful ills to OEdipus divin'd;
 And as his words mysterious I explore,
 Unnumber'd doubts perplex my anxious mind,

Now rais'd by hope, and now with fears oppress'd,

Sorrow and joy alternate fill my breast:

How shou'd these hapless kings be foes,

When never strife between them rose!

Or why shou'd Laius, slain by hands unknown,
Bring foul disgrace on Polybus' unhappy son?

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

From Phœbus and all-seeing Jove

Nought can be hid of actions here below ;

But earthly prophets may deceitful prove,

And little more than other mortals know :

Though much in wisdom man doth man excell,

In all that's human error still must dwell :

Cou'd he commit the bloody deed,

Who from the Sphynx our city freed?

O! no! he never shed the guiltless blood,

The Sphynx declares him wise, and innocent, and good.

[Exeunt.

Polybus' unhappy son. This circumstance pleads strongly in favour of OEdipus, who is still supposed to be the son of Polybus; it was not therefore probable, that he should murder a man who had never injured him, and with whom he could have no connection.

End of A C T II.

A C T

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

C R E O N, C H O R U S.

C R E O N.

O! citizens, with grief I hear your king
 Hath blasted the fair fame of guiltless Creon!
 And most unjustly brands me with a crime
 My soul abhors: whilst desolation spreads
 On ev'ry side, and universal ruin
 Hangs o'er the land, if I in word or deed
 Cou'd join to swell the woes of hapless Thebes,
 I were unworthy, nay I wou'd not wish
 To live another day: alas, my friends,
 Thus to be deem'd a traitor to my country,
 To you my fellow-citizens, to all
 That hear me, O! 'tis infamy, and shame;
 I cannot, will not bear it.

C H O R U S.

'Twas th' effect

Of sudden anger only, what he said
 But cou'd not think.

C R E O N.

Who told him I suborn'd

The

The prophet to speak falsely? what cou'd raise
This vile suspision?

C H O R U S.

Such he had, but whence

I know not.

C R E O N.

Talk'd he thus with firm compofure
And confidence of mind?

C H O R U S.

I cannot fay;

'Tis not for me to know the thoughts of kings,
Or judge their actions; but behold, he comes.

S C E N E II.

O E D I P U S, C R E O N, C H O R U S.

O E D I P U S.

Ha! Creon here? and dar'ft thou thus approach
My palace, thou who woud'ft have murther'd me,
And ta'en my kingdom? by the gods I ask thee,
Answer me, traitor, did'ft thou think me fool,
Or coward, that I cou'd not fee thy arts,
Or had not ftrength to vanquifh them? what madnefs,
What ftange infatuation led thee on,
Without or force, or friends, to grasp at empire,
Which only their united force can give?

What

What wert thou doing?

C R E O N.

Hear what I shall answer,

Then judge impartial.

O E D I P U S.

Thou can't talk it well,

But I shall ne'er attend to thee; thy guilt
Is plain; thou art my deadliest foe.

C R E O N.

But hear

What I shall urge.

O E D I P U S.

Say not, thou'rt innocent.

C R E O N.

If self-opinion void of reason seem
Conviction to thee, know thou err'st most grossly.

O E D I P U S.

And thou more grossly, if thou think'st to pass
Unpunish'd for this inj'ry to thy friend.

C R E O N.

I shou'd not, were I guilty; but what crime
Have I committed? tell me.

O E D I P U S.

Wert not thou

The

The man who urg'd me to require the aid
Of your all-knowing prophet?

C R E O N.

True, I was ;

I did persuade you; so I wou'd again.

OE D I P U S.

How long is it since Laius—

C R E O N.

Laius? what?

OE D I P U S.

Since Laius fell by hands unknown?

C R E O N.

A long,

Long tract of years.

OE D I P U S.

Was this Tiresias then

A prophet?

C R E O N.

Ay! in wisdom and in fame

As now excelling.

OE D I P U S.

Did he then say aught

Concerning me?

C R E O N.

I never heard he did.

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

Touching this murther, did you ne'er enquire
Who were the authors?

C R E O N.

Doubtlefs; but in vain.

O E D I P U S.

Why did not this fame prophet then inform you?

C R E O N.

I know not that, and when I'm ignorant
I'm always filent.

O E D I P U S.

What concerns thyself

At leaft thou know'ft, and therefore fhoud'ft declare it.

C R E O N.

What is it? ſpeak; and if 'tis in my pow'r,
I'll answer thee.

O E D I P U S.

Thou know'ft, if this Tirefias

Had not combin'd with thee, he wou'd not thus

Accufe me, as the murtherer of Laius.

C R E O N.

What he declares, thou beft can'ft tell: of me,

What thou requir'ft, myſelf am yet to learn.

O E D I P U S.

Go, learn it then; but ne'er ſhalt thou diſcover,

That OEdipus is guilty.

C R E O N.

Art not thou

My sister's husband?

OE D I P U S.

Granted.

C R E O N.

Join'd with her,

Thou rul'st o'er Thebes.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis true, and all she asks

Most freely do I give her.

C R E O N.

Is not Creon

In honour next to you?

OE D I P U S.

Thou art; and therefore

The more ungrateful.

C R E O N.

Hear what I shall plead,

And thou wilt never think so: tell me, prince,

Is

Join'd with her, &c. Creon, as brother to the queen, and presumptive heir to the crown after the death of Laius, had reason to think himself aggrieved by the marriage of OEdipus, and his succession to the kingdom of Thebes; a circumstance which, though unobserved by the commentators, accounts in the most probable manner for the strong suspicions of the one, and the warm resentment of the other.

Is there a man, who wou'd prefer a throne
With all its dangers to an equal rank
In peace and safety? I am not of those
Who chuse the name of king before the pow'r;
Fools only make such wishes: I have all
From thee, and fearless I enjoy it all:
Had I the sceptre, often must I act
Against my will; know then, I am not yet
So void of sense and reason, as to quit
A real 'vantage for a seeming good:
Am I not happy, am I not rever'd,
Embrac'd, and lov'd by all? to me they come
Who want thy favour, and by me acquire it:
What then shou'd Creon wish for; shall he leave
All this for empire? bad desires corrupt
The fairest mind: I never entertain'd
A thought so vile, nor wou'd I lend my aid
To forward such base purposes: but go
To Delphos, ask the sacred oracle
If I have spoke the truth; if there you find
That with the prophet I conspir'd, destroy
The guilty Creon; not thy voice alone
Shall then condemn me, for myself will join
In the just sentence; but accuse me not

On weak suspicion's most uncertain test ;
 Justice wou'd never call the wicked good,
 Or brand fair virtue with the name of vice
 Unmerited: to cast away a friend
 Faithful and just, is to deprive ourselves
 Of life and being, which we hold most dear :
 But time and time alone revealeth all ;
 That only shews the good man's excellence ;
 A day sufficeth to unmask the wicked.

C H O R U S.

O! king, his caution merits your regard ;
 Who judge in haste do seldom judge aright.

O E D I P U S.

When they are quick who plot against my life,
 'Tis fit I shou'd be quick in my defence ;
 If I am tame and silent, all they wish
 Will soon be done, and OEdipus must fall.

C R E O N.

What wou'dst thou have? my banishment?

O E D I P U S.

Thy death.

C R E O N.

But first inform me wherefore I shou'd dye.

O E D I P U S.

Dost thou rebel then? wilt thou not submit?

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Not when I see thee thus deceiv'd.

O E D I P U S.

'Tis fit

I shou'd defend my own.

C R E O N.

And so shou'd I.

O E D I P U S.

Thou art a traitor.

C R E O N.

What if it shou'd prove

I am not so.

O E D I P U S.

A king must be obey'd.

C R E O N.

Not if his orders are unjust.

O E D I P U S.

O! Thebes!

O!

Not if his orders are unjust. This republican sentiment, though extremely well adapted to an athenian audience, is but ill suited to the taste of an arbitrary government. Mr. Dacier has therefore, with the true spirit of a Frenchman, apologised, in his notes, for this freedom; he observes, that the christian religion teaches us to obey not only good, but the worst of princes, and asserts that to oblige kings to give a reason for their actions, is the highest injustice, being in fact no less a crime than to turn kings into subjects, and subjects into kings: were an Englishman to comment on this passage, he would perhaps be of a direct contrary opinion, and prefer the sentiment of Sophocles to that of the French critic.

O! citizens!

C R E O N.

I too can call on Thebes;
She is my country.

C H O R U S.

O! no more, my lords,
For see, Jocasta comes in happiest hour
To end your contest.

S C E N E III.

J O C A S T A, C R E O N, O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

J O C A S T A.

Whence this sudden tumult?

O! princes, is this well? at such a time
With idle broils to multiply the woes
Of wretched Thebes? Home, home, for shame, nor thus
With private quarrels swell the public ruin.

C R E O N.

Sister, thy husband hath most basely us'd me;
He threatens me with banishment or death.

O E D I P U S.

I do confess it; for he did conspire
With vile and wicked arts against my life.

C R E O N.

O! may I never prosper, but accurs'd,
Unpity'd, perish if I ever did.

J O C A S T A.

J O C A S T A:

Believe him, OEdipus; revere the gods
Whom he attests, if thou dost love Jocasta;
Thy subjects beg it of thee.

C H O R U S.

Hear, O! king;
Consider, we intreat thee.

O E D I P U S.

What woud'ft have?
Think you I'll e'er submit to him?

C H O R U S.

Revere
His character, his oath, both pleading for him:

O E D I P U S.

But know you what you ask?

C H O R U S.

We do.

O E D I P U S.

What is it?

C H O R U S.

We ask thee to believe a guiltless friend,
Nor cast him forth dishonour'd thus, on flight
Suspicion's weak surmise.

O E D I P U S.

Requesting this,

You

You do request my banishment, or death.

C H O R U S.

No; by yon leader of the heavenly host,
Th' immortal sun, I had not such a thought;
I only felt for Thebes' distressful state,
And wou'd not have it by domestic strife
Embitter'd thus.

O E D I P U S.

Why, let him then depart:
If OEdipus must die, or leave his country,
For shameful exile, be it so; I yield
To thy request, not his; for hateful still
Shall Creon ever be.

C R E O N.

Thy stubborn soul
Bends with reluctance, and when anger fires it
Is terrible; but natures form'd like thine
Are their own punishment.

O E D I P U S.

Wilt thou not hence?

Wilt not be gone?

C R E O N.

I go; thou know'st me not;
But these will do me justice. [Exit Creon.

S C E N E

S C E N E IV.

J O C A S T A, O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Princes, now

Perfuade him to retire.

J O C A S T A.

First, let me know

The caufe of this diffenfion.

C H O R U S.

From reports

Uncertain, and fufpicious moft injurious,

The quarrel rofe.

J O C A S T A.

Was th' accufation mutual?

C H O R U S.

It was.

J O C A S T A.

What follow'd then?

C H O R U S.

Ask me no more;

Enough's already known; we'll not repeat

The woes of haplefs Thebes.

O E D I P U S.

You all are blind,

Inſenſible, unjuſt; you love me not,
Yet boaſt your piety.

C H O R U S.

I ſaid before,
Again I ſay, that not to love my king
Ev'n as myſelf wou'd mark me for the worſt
Of men; for thou did'ſt ſave expiring Thebes:
O! riſe once more, protect, preſerve thy country!

J O C A S T A.

O! king, inform me, whence this ſtrange diſſention?

O E D I P U S.

I'll tell thee, my Jocaſta, for thou know'ſt
The love I bear thee, what this wicked Creon
Did artfully deviſe againſt me.

J O C A S T A.

Speak it,

If he indeed be guilty.

O E D I P U S.

Creon ſays

That I did murder Laius.

J O C A S T A.

Spake he this,

As knowing it himſelf, or from another?

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

He had fuborn'd that evil-working prieft ;
And fharpens ev'ry tongue againft his king.

J O C A S T A.

Let not a fear perplex thee, OEdipus ;
Mortals know nothing of futurity,
And thefe prophetic feers are all impoftors ;
I'll prove it to thee : know then, Laius once,
Not from Apollo, but his priefts, receiv'd
An oracle, which faid, it was decreed
He fhould be flain by his own fon, the offspring
Of Laius and Jocasta ; yet he fell
By ftangers, murther'd, for fo fame reports,
By robbers in the place where three ways meet :
A fon was born, but e'er three days had paff,
The infant's feet were bor'd ; a fervant took
And left him on the pathlefs mountain's top,
To perifh there : thus Phœbus ne'er decreed
That he fhould kill his father, or that Laius,
Which much he fear'd, fhould by his fon be flain :
Such is the truth of oracles ; henceforth
Regard them not ; what heav'n would have us know,
It can with eafe unfold, and will reveal it.

O E D I P U S.

What thou hast said, Jocasta, much disturbs me;
I tremble at it.

J O C A S T A.

Wherefore shou'dst thou fear?

O E D I P U S.

Methought I heard thee say, Laius was slain
Where three ways meet.

J O C A S T A.

'Twas so reported then,

And is so still.

O E D I P U S.

Where happen'd the misfortune?

J O C A S T A.

In Phocis, where the roads unite that lead
To Delphi and to Daulia.

O E D I P U S.

How long since?

J O C A S T A.

What thou hast said &c. The conduct of the fable, throughout this play, cannot be sufficiently admired; every thing advanced by Jocasta, to destroy the force of the oracle, tends to confirm it; and every argument, which she brings to remove the fears of OEdipus, increases them: the whole visibly calculated to impress this moral and religious truth on the minds of the audience, viz. that whatever is decreed by divine providence must inevitably come to pass; and that all the means, which are made use of by men to counteract it's designs, do, in the end, only promote and forward the accomplishment of them: nothing can be more interesting than the following scene between Oedipus and Jocasta.

J O C A S T A.

A little time e'er you began to reign
O'er Thebes, we heard it.

O E D I P U S.

O! almighty Jove!

What wilt thou do with me?

J O C A S T A.

Why talk'ft thou thus?

O E D I P U S.

Ask me no more; but tell me of this Laius,
What was his age, and stature?

J O C A S T A.

He was tall;

His hairs juft turning to the filver hue;
His form not much unlike thy own.

O E D I P U S.

O! me!

Sure I have call'd down curfes on myself
Unknowing.

J O C A S T A.

Ha! what fay'ft thou, OEdipus!

I tremble whilst I look on thee.

O E D I P U S.

O! much

I fear, the prophet saw too well; but say,
One thing will make it clear.

J O C A S T A.

I dread to hear it;

Yet speak, and I will tell thee.

OE D I P U S.

Went he forth

With few attendants, or a num'rous train,
In kingly pomp?

J O C A S T A.

They were but five in all;

The herald with them; but one chariot there,
Which carried Laius.

OE D I P U S.

O! 'tis but too plain:

Who brought the news?

J O C A S T A.

A servant, who alone

Escap'd

With few attendants. Dacier laughs, with some reason, at the absurdity of Seneca, who, in his ridiculous refinement on Sophocles, equips Laius with a large retinue; but informs us, that great part of his guards lost their way, and left his majesty with only two or three footmen in a by-place. 'Voilà (says the French critic) une belle invention, de faire égarer les gardes dans un voyage de Thebes à Delphes, c'est à dire, dans un chemin aussi connu que celui de Paris à Versailles, & presque aussi fréquenté.' Mr. Dacier is right in his criticism; but to expose the errors of Seneca would be an endless and unnecessary task; the truest idea of the merit of Sophocles might perhaps be form'd by an accurate comparison of his OEdipus with that of his Roman rival.

Escap'd with life.

OE D I P U S.

That servant, is he here?

J O C A S T A.

O! no! his master slain, when he return'd
 And saw thee on the throne of Thebes, with pray'r
 Most earnest he beseech'd me to dismiss him,
 That he might leave this city, where he wish'd
 No longer to be seen, but to retire,
 And feed my flocks; I granted his request;
 For that and more his honest services
 Had merited.

OE D I P U S.

I beg he may be sent for

Immediately.

J O C A S T A.

He shall; but wherefore is it?

OE D I P U S.

I fear thou'st said too much, and therefore wish
 To see him.

J O C A S T A.

He shall come; but, O! my lord,
 Am I not worthy to be told the cause
 Of this distress?

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S .

Thou art, and I will tell thee ;
 Thou art my hope ; to whom shou'd I impart
 My sorrows, but to thee ? Know then, Jocasta,
 I am the the son of Polybus, who reigns
 At Corinth, and the Dorian Merope
 His queen ; there long I held the foremost rank,
 Honour'd and happy, when a strange event,
 (For strange it was, tho' little meriting
 'The deep concern I felt) alarm'd me much ;
 A drunken rev'ler at a feast proclaim'd
 That I was only the supposed son
 Of Corinth's king ; scarce cou'd I bear that day
 The vile reproach ; the next, I fought my parents,
 And ask'd of them the truth ; they too, enrag'd,
 Repented much the base indignity ;
 I lik'd their tender warmth, but still I felt
 A secret anguish, and unknown to them
 Sought out the Pythian oracle ; in vain ;
 Touching my parents, nothing cou'd I learn ;
 But dreadful were the mis'ries it denounc'd
 Against me ; 'twas my fate, Apollo said,
 To wed my mother, to produce a race
 Accursed and abhorr'd ; and last, to slay

My father who begat me; sad decree!
 Left I shou'd e'er fulfil the dire prediction,
 Instant I fled from Corinth, by the stars
 Guiding my hapless journey to the place
 Where thou report'st this wretched king was slain;
 But I will tell thee the whole truth; at length
 I came to where the three ways meet; when, lo!
 A herald, with another man like him
 Whom thou describ'st, and in a chariot, met me;
 Both strove with violence to drive me back;
 Enrag'd I struck the charioteer, when strait,
 As I advanc'd, the old man saw, and twice
 Smote me o'th' head, but dearly soon repay'd
 The insult on me; from his chariot roll'd
 Prone on the earth, beneath my staff he fell,
 And instantly expir'd: th' attendant train
 All shar'd his fate: if this unhappy stranger
 And Laius be the same, lives there a wretch

VOL. II.

G g

So

By the stars, &c. Most of the commentators on this passage have consider'd it merely as a proverbial expression, apply'd in general to all who made long and dangerous journeys, and only alluding to the custom of navigators, who were directed in their voyages by the stars; but as astronomy was in great esteem amongst the antients, it is perhaps most probable that they guided themselves by land, as well as by sea, according to the course and situation of those luminaries: there is therefore no occasion to have recourse to a proverb for the expression, especially as the method of travelling is in practice, in some parts of the world, even to this day.

So curs'd, so hateful to the gods as I am?
 Nor citizen, nor alien must receive,
 Or converse, or communion hold with me,
 But drive me forth with infamy and shame;
 The dreadful curse pronounc'd by my own lips
 Shall soon o'ertake me: I have stain'd the bed
 Of him whom I had murther'd; am I then
 Aught but pollution? If I fly from hence,
 The bed of incest meets me, and I go
 To slay my father Polybus, the best,
 The tend'rest parent; this must be the work
 Of some malignant pow'r: ye righteous gods,
 Let me not see that day, but rest in death,
 Rather than suffer such calamity!

C H O R U S.

O! king, we pity thy distress; but wait
 With patience his arrival, and despair not.

O E D I P U S.

My father Polybus, &c. The plot advances gradually, and as it were insensibly, to the utmost point of perfection: OEdipus is already but too well convinced that he is the murtherer of Laius, but still believes himself the son of Polybus, and Merope. If the casual murther of a stranger, and the marriage of his widow, makes him so unhappy; what will be his condition, when he discovers that stranger to be his father, and that widow, his mother?

His arrival. The arrival of the shepherd mention'd by Jocasta, whom we shall find of signal service in keeping up the attention of the spectators and protracting the catastrophe.

OE D I P U S.

That shepherd is my only hope: Jocasta,
Wou'd he were here!

J O C A S T A.

Suppose he were; what then?

What wou'dst thou do?

OE D I P U S.

I'll tell thee; if he says
The same as thou dost, I am safe, and guiltless.

J O C A S T A.

What said I then?

OE D I P U S.

Thou said'st he did report
Laius was slain by robbers; if 'tis true
He fell by numbers, I am innocent,
For I was unattended; if but one
Attack'd and slew him, doubtless I am he.

J O C A S T A.

Be satisfy'd it must be as he first
Reported it; he cannot change the tale;
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it:
Or grant he shou'd, the oracle was ne'er
Fulfill'd; for Phœbus said, Jocasta's son
Shou'd slay his father; that cou'd never be;

For, O! Jocasta's son long since is dead ;
 He cou'd not murther Laius ; therefore, never
 Will I attend to prophecies again.

OE D I P U S.

Right, my Jocasta ; but, I beg thee, send
 And fetch this shepherd ; do not fail.

J O C A S T A.

I will

This moment ; come, my lord, let us go in ;
 I will do nothing but what pleases thee.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Grant me henceforth, ye pow'rs divine,
 In virtue's purest paths to tread !
 In ev'ry word, in ev'ry deed,
 May sanctity of manners ever shine !
 Obedient to the laws of Jove,
 The laws descended from above,

Which

Grant me henceforth &c. This is the third intermede or song of the chorus ; who shock'd at the impiety of Jocasta, in questioning the truth of the oracle, agreeably to their office and character, declare their abhorrence of such presumption, and deprecate the wrath of the gods, which must inevitably fall on the delinquent : the whole is full of noble and religious sentiments adapted to the subject.

Which, not like those by feeble mortals giv'n,
 Bury'd in dark oblivion lye,
 Or worn by time decay, and dye,
 But bloom eternal like their native heav'n!

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Pride first gave birth to tyranny :
 That hateful vice, insulting pride,
 When, ev'ry human pow'r defy'd,
 She lifts to glory's heighth her votary ;
 Soon stumbling from her tott'ring throne,
 She throws the wretched victim down :
 But may the god indulgent hear my pray'r,
 That god whom humbly I adore,
 O! may he smile on Thebes once more,
 And take it's wretched monarch to his care!

S T R O P H E II.

Perish the impious and prophane,
 Who, void of reverential fear,
 Nor justice, nor the laws revere,
 Who leave their god for pleasure or for gain!
 Who swell by fraud their ill-got store,
 Who rob the wretched and the poor!

If

Perish the impious &c. This apparently glances at the conduct of Jocasta in the preceding scene ; though the chorus, out of respect to their sovereign, express themselves in general terms, and rather seem to exculpate themselves than to accuse her.

If vice unpunish'd virtue's meed obtain,
 Who shall refrain th' impetuous soul?
 The rebel passions who controul?
 Or wherefore do I lead this choral train?

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

No more to Delphi's sacred shrine
 Need we with incense now repair,
 No more shall Phocis hear our pray'r,
 Nor fair Olympia see her rites divine;
 If oracles no longer prove
 The pow'r of Phœbus and of Jove:
 Great lord of all, from thy eternal throne
 Behold, how impious men defame
 Thy lov'd Apollo's honour'd name;
 O! guard his rights, and vindicate thy own.

[Exeunt.

If vice unpunish'd &c. 'If vice, says the chorus, meets with the reward of
 'virtue, who will be good and virtuous, or why should we sacrifice to the
 'gods?' We meet with a parallel passage in holy writ.

'I was grieved at the wicked (says David) I do see the ungodly in such
 'prosperity, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession;
 'and I said, then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands
 'in innocency.'
 Psal. 73.

No more to Delphi's &c. It was usual to depute certain priests from every
 temple to carry offerings to the temple of Apollo, and to assist at the assem-
 blies of Greece, particularly at Olympia, or Pisa, a city of Elis in the Pello-
 ponnesus, famous for the Olympic games, and the temple of Jupiter.

End of A C T III.

A C T

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

J O C A S T A, C H O R U S.

J O C A S T A.

SAGES and rulers of the land, I come
 To seek the altars of the gods, and there
 With incense and oblations to appease
 Offended heav'n: my OEdipus, alas!
 No longer wife and prudent, as you all
 Remember once he was, with present things
 Compares the past, nor judges like himself;
 Unnumber'd cares perplex his anxious mind,
 And ev'ry tale awakes new terrors in him;
 Vain is my counsel, for he hears me not.
 First then, to thee, O! Phœbus, for thou still

Art

Sages and rulers &c. The title of *Αρχηται*, or rulers, with which Jocasta salutes the chorus, plainly points out to us the age and dignity of those who composed it, being only given to the guardians and defenders of their country. Jocasta, we see, alarm'd at the despondency and miserable condition of OEdipus, enters with boughs of supplication in her hand, and is going with great humility to the temples of the gods, whose oracles she had just before treated with contempt: so natural is the transition from open impiety and presumption to servile fears, and enthusiastic superstition.

First then to thee, &c. The words 'αγγιστος εσσι' 'thou art the nearest,' have puzzled the commentators. I have ventured to give them a figurative sense, as most agreeable to the context. There is, I think, a propriety in her first and particular application to Apollo on this occasion, as it was probably meant to make amends for her former impiety and contempt of him.

Art near to help the wretched, we appeal;
 And suppliant beg thee now to grant thy aid
 Propitious; deep is our distress; for, O!
 We see our pilot sinking at the helm,
 And much already fear the vessel lost.

S C E N E II.

SHEPHERD from Corinth, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

S H E P H E R D.

Can you instruct me, strangers, which way lyes
 The palace of king OEdipus; himself
 I wou'd most gladly see; can you inform me?

C H O R U S.

This is the palace; he is now within;
 Thou see'st his queen before thee.

S H E P H E R D.

Ever blest

And happy with the happy may'st thou live.

J O C A S T A.

Stranger, the same good wish to thee, for well
 Thy words deserve it; but say, wherefore com'st thou,

And

With the happy, &c. There is something remarkable in this wish; 'may'st thou live, not only happy thyself, but with those who are so!' Sophocles knew that a good mind, even in the midst of affluence, could enjoy no felicity, whilst there were scenes of misery, and distress before it; and that all human happiness is increased by participation.

And what's thy news?

S H E P H E R D.

To thee, and to thy husband,
Pleasure, and joy.

J O C A S T A.

What pleasure? and whence art thou?

S H E P H E R D.

From Corinth: to be brief, I bring thee tidings
Of good and evil.

J O C A S T A.

Ha! what mean thy words

Ambiguous?

S H E P H E R D.

Know then, if report say true,
The Isthmian people will choose OEdipus
Their sov'reign.

J O C A S T A.

Is not Polybus their king?

S H E P H E R D.

No; Polybus is dead.

V O L. II.

H h

J O C A S T A.

The Isthmian people. The people of Corinth; so called from the famous Isthmus there.

Polybus is dead. This peripetie, or change of fortune, arising so naturally, and so agreeably bringing on the catastrophe, has been deservedly celebrated by the critics: the news of Polybus's death, and the discovery of his not being the father of OEdipus, instead of delivering that unfortunate king from all his fears, becomes the means of displaying his guilt, and involving him in ruin and destruction: nothing, as Aristotle observes, can be more completely tragical.

J O C A S T A.

What say'st thou? dead?

S H E P H E R D.

If I speak falsely, may death seize on me!

J O C A S T A.

[To one of her attendants.

Why fly'st thou not to tell thy master? hence!

What are you now, you oracles divine!

Where is your truth? the fearful Oedipus,

From Corinth fled, lest he shou'd slay the king,

This Polybus, who perish'd, not by him,

But by the hand of heav'n.

S C E N E III.

OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, SHEPHERD, CHORUS.

O E D I P U S.

My dear Jocasta,

Why hast thou call'd me hither?

J O C A S T A.

Hear this man,

And when thou hear'st him, mark what faith is due

To your revered oracles.

O E D I P U S.

Who is he?

And what doth he report?

J O C A S T A.

He comes from Corinth;

And

And fays, thy father Polybus is dead.

OE D I P U S.

What fay'ft thou, ft ranger? fpeak to me, O! fpeak.

S H E P H E R D.

If touching this thou firft defir'ft my anfwer;

Know, he is dead.

OE D I P U S.

How dy'd he? fay, by treafon,

Or fome difeafe?

S H E P H E R D.

Alas! a little force

Will lay to reft the weary limbs of age.

OE D I P U S.

Distemper then did kill him?

S H E P H E R D.

That in part,

And part a length of years that wore him down.

OE D I P U S.

Now, my Jocasta, who fhall henceforth trust
To prophecies, and feers, and clam'rous birds
With their vain omens: they who had decreed
That I fhould kill my father? he, thou feeft
Beneath the earth lies buried, whilst I live
In fafety here, and guiltlefs of his blood:

H h 2

Unless

Unless perhaps sorrow for loss of me
 Shorten'd his days, thus only cou'd I kill
 My father; but he's gone, and to the shades
 Hath carry'd with him those vain oracles
 Of fancy'd ills, no longer worth my care.

J O C A S T A.

Did I not say it wou'd be thus?

OE D I P U S.

Thou didst;

But I was full of fears.

J O C A S T A.

Henceforth, no more

Indulge them.

OE D I P U S.

But my mother's bed—that still
 Must be avoided: I must fly from that.

J O C A S T A.

Unless perhaps &c. This is merely as it were in triumph over the prediction, and as a circumstance too ridiculous to deserve attention. As soon as OEdipus is acquainted with the death of Polybus, his supposed father, he sides with Jocasta, and laughs at the oracle: the event, however, proved the folly of this contempt and impiety, and conveys at the same time this useful lesson to mankind, viz. that nothing is to be doubted, ridiculed, or call'd in question, that comes from heaven, how disputable soever it may appear in the eyes of men, who are unable to comprehend it. If the antient drama may be thought by some to fall short of the modern in some less important points, we must at least acknowledge it, with regard to morality, infinitely superior to our own.

J O C A S T A.

Why shou'd man fear, whom chance, and chance alone
 Doth ever rule? Foreknowledge all is vain,
 And can determine nothing; therefore best
 It is to live as fancy leads, at large,
 Uncurb'd, and only subject to our will.
 Fear not thy mother's bed: oft'times in dreams
 Have men committed incest; but his life
 Will ever be most happy, who contemns
 Such idle phantoms.

O E D I P U S.

Thou wert right, Jocasta,

Did not my mother live; but as it is,
 Spite of thy words, I must be anxious still.

J O C A S T A.

Think on thy father's death, it is a light

To

Why shou'd man fear &c. Jocasta had already treated the oracle of Apollo with contempt; we are not therefore surpris'd at the impiety of this sentiment, which has been embraced by the despisers of religion from the earliest period of time to this day. When men are once persuad'd that chance and not providence rules all things here below, they naturally conclude themselves at liberty to follow their own inclinations, without the least regard to the will of heaven, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we dye.' The discovery of Jocasta's guilt, and her immediate punishment was apparently design'd by Sophocles as a lesson to the free-thinkers of his age, and may afford no unprofitable admonition to those of our own.

It is a light &c. The expression, in the original, is something singular,

περας

To guide thee here.

OE D I P U S:

It is so; yet I fear

Whilst she survives him.

S H E P H E R D.

Who is it you mean?

What woman fear you?

OE D I P U S.

Merope, the wife

Of Polybus.

S H E P H E R D.

And wherefore fear you her?

OE D I P U S.

Know, stranger, a most dreadful oracle
Concerning her affrights me.

S H E P H E R D.

May I know it,

Or must it be reveal'd to none but thee?

OE D I P U S.

O! no! I'll tell thee; Phœbus hath declar'd
That OEdipus shou'd stain his mother's bed,

And

' *μεγας οφθαλμος ει πατρος ταφαι,* ' the tomb of thy father, is a great eye; i. e. an eye by which thou may'st see how little oracles are to be confided in, which with regard to him have already proved false.

And dip his hands in his own father's blood;
 Wherefore I fled from Corinth, and liv'd here,
 In happiness indeed; but still thou know'st
 It is a blessing to behold our parents,
 And that I had not.

S H E P H E R D.

Was it for this cause

Thou wert an exile then?

O E D I P U S.

It was; I fear'd

That I might one day prove my father's murth'rer.

S H E P H E R D.

What if I come, O! king, to banish hence
 Thy terrors, and restore thy peace.

O E D I P U S.

O! stranger,

Cou'dst thou do this, I wou'd reward thee nobly.

S H E P H E R D.

Know then, for this I came; I came to serve,
 And make thee happy.

O E D I P U S.

But I will not go

Back to my parents:

S H E P-

OE D I P U S

S H E P H E R D.

Son, I see thou know'st not
What thou art doing;

OE D I P U S.

Wherefore think'st thou so?
By heav'n I beg thee then do thou instruct me.

S H E P H E R D.

If thou did'st fly from Corinth for this cause.

OE D I P U S.

Apollo's dire predictions still affright me.

S H E P H E R D.

Fear'st thou pollution from thy parents?

OE D I P U S.

That,

And that alone I dread.

S H E P H E R D.

Thy fears are vain.

OE D I P U S.

Son, &c. Dacier observes on this passage, that the age and condition of the shepherd, who had saved OEdipus in his infancy, might entitle him to the use of this appellation; but remarks, at the same time, that such familiarity from a shepherd to a king would not suit with French manners, nor the expression be admitted in the French tongue. Abhorrent however as it may be to a French ear, it is by no means disagreeable to an English one, as the frequent use of it in Shakeſpear and other writers sufficiently confirms.

If thou did'st fly &c. This is a continuation of the shepherd's last speech, who pursues his sentiment without regard to the intervening request of OEdipus.

O E D I P U S.

Not if they are my parents.

S H E P H E R D.

Polybus

Was not a-kin to thee.

O E D I P U S.

What say'st thou? Speak;

Say, was not Polybus my father?

S H E P H E R D.

No;

No more than he is mine.

O E D I P U S.

Why call me then

His son?

S H E P H E R D.

Because long since I gave thee to him;

He did receive thee from these hands.

V O L. II.

I i

O E D I-

Polybus was not a-kin &c. One may easily conceive the powerful effect, which this first discovery must have had on the mind of OEdipus, and how finely and gradually it prepares the terrible and affecting catastrophe. Aristotle has with great truth therefore observed, that nothing could be better imagined than the circumstance before us. See his Art of Poetry, chap. xi.

No more than he is mine. In the original, here follow two lines, which have either no meaning at all, or a very foolish one, and which I have therefore omitted in the translation.

O E D I P U S.

Indeed?

And cou'd he love another's child so well?

S H E P H E R D.

He had no children; that perswaded him
To take and keep thee.

O E D I P U S.

Did'st thou buy me then,
Or am I thine, and must I call thee father?

S H E P H E R D.

I found thee in Cithæron's woody vale.

O E D I P U S.

What brought thee there?

S H E P H E R D.

I came to feed my flocks
On the green mountain's side.

O E D I P U S.

It seems thou wert
A wand'ring shepherd.

S H E P H E R D.

Thy deliverer;
I sav'd thee from destruction.

O E D I P U S.

How! what then

Had

Had happen'd to me?

S H E P H E R D.

Thy own feet will best

Inform thee of that circumstance.

O E D I P U S.

Alas!

Why call'st thou to remembrance a misfortune
Of so long date?

S H E P H E R D.

'Twas I who loos'd the tendons
Of thy bored feet.

O E D I P U S.

It seems in infancy

I suffer'd much then.

S H E P H E R D.

To this accident

Thou ow'st thy name.

O E D I P U S.

My father, or my mother,

Who did it? know'st thou?

I i 2

S H E P-

Thou ow'st thy name. ΟΙΔΙΠΟΣ, or OEdipus, signifies in the Greek, swell'd-foot, 'δία το οιδειν της ποδός' 'tumore natus nomen ac vitio pedum (says 'Seneca' 'taking his name from the fire and swelling of his foot.' This remarkable circumstance, which so strongly confirms the shepherd's veracity, awakens the suspicions, and raises the curiosity of OEdipus, who proceeds from question to question to a full conviction of his own guilt and misery.

O E D I P U S

S H E P H E R D.

He, who gave thee to me,
Must tell thee that.

O E D I P U S.

Then from another's hand
Thou did'st receive me.

S H E P H E R D.

Ay, another shepherd.

O E D I P U S.

Who was he? Can'st thou recollect?

S H E P H E R D.

'Twas one,

At least so call'd, of Laius' family.

O E D I P U S.

Laius, who rul'd at Thebes?

S H E P H E R D.

The same; this man

Was shepherd to king Laius.

O E D I P U S.

Lives he still,

And cou'd I see him?

S H E P H E R D. [pointing to chorus.

Some of these perhaps

His countrymen may give you information.

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S [to the chorus.

O! speak, my friends, if any of you know
This shepherd; whether still he lives at Thebes
Or in some neighb'ring country; tell me quick,
For it concerns us near.

C H O R U S.

It must be he
Whom thou did'st lately send for; but the queen
Can best inform thee.

OE D I P U S.

Know'st thou, my Jocasta,
Whether the man whom thou didst order hither,
And whom the shepherd speaks of, be the same?

J O C A S T A.

Whom meant he? for I know not. OEdipus,
Think not so deeply of this thing.

OE D I P U S.

Good heav'n
Forbid, Jocasta, I shou'd now neglect
To clear my birth, when thus the path is mark'd

And

Whom meant he? Jocasta, already but too well acquainted with the horrid truth, is reduced to a state of stupefaction: she pretends, when OEdipus addresses her, to be ignorant of all that has been said, and endeavours to dissuade him from all farther enquiry; her advice naturally increases that curiosity which it was meant to remove, and leads the unfortunate OEdipus to a discovery of the whole.

And open to me!

J O C A S T A.

Do not, by the gods

I beg thee, do not, if thy life be dear,
Make farther search, for I have felt enough
Already from it.

OE D I P U S.

Rest thou satisfy'd;

Were I descended from a race of slaves,
'Twou'd not dishonour thee.

J O C A S T A.

Yet hear me; do not,

Once more I beg thee, do not search this matter.

OE D I P U S.

I will not be persuaded: I must search
And find it too.

J O C A S T A.

I know it best, and best

Advise thee.

OE D I P U S.

That advice perplexes more.

J O C A S T A.

A race of slaves. The original is, 'εδ'αν εκ τριτης εγω μητρος φανω τριδελος'
'not if I was thrice a slave from a third mother, i. e. not if my mother, with
her mother, and grandmother, for three generations back, had been slaves.
This could not be admitted in the translation.

J O C A S T A.

O! wou'd to heav'n that thou may'st never know
Or who, or whence thou art!

O E D I P U S. [to the attendants.

Let some one fetch
That shepherd quick, and leave this woman here
To glory in her high descent.

J O C A S T A:

Alas!

Unhappy OEdipus! that word alone
I now can speak, remember 'tis my last.

[Exit Jocasta.

S C E N E IV.

O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Why fled the queen in such disorder hence?

Sorely

Remember 'tis my last. The silence and departure of Jocasta, on this occasion, are extremely judicious, and infinitely preferable to the rhetorical parade of lamentation put into her mouth by Seneca, Corneille and Dryden; nothing more could, indeed, be said by her with any degree of propriety: she was already convinced of her own and OEdipus's guilt, and in consequence of it had resolved to destroy herself; 'remember 'tis my last word;' this, we see, is purposely express'd in an ambiguous manner, and OEdipus does not perceive that she means never to speak to him again. Dacier remarks, that the conduct of Sophocles is truly admirable in this particular; for though it was absolutely necessary that Jocasta should be present at the unraveling of the plot, and discovery of OEdipus's birth, it was no longer so when the discovery was made, as their meeting afterwards would have been shocking and indecent: the truth of this observation may be justified by turning to Seneca, where the reader will see how that pompous writer has fail'd by leaving his master, and trusting to his own weaker genius.

Sorely distress'd she seem'd, and much I fear
Her silence bodes some sad event.

OE D I P U S.

Whate'er

May come of that, I am resolv'd to know
The secret of my birth, how mean soever
It chance to prove; perhaps her sex's pride
May make her blush to find I was not born
Of noble parents; but I call myself
The son of fortune, my indulgent mother,
Whom I shall never be ashamed to own.
The kindred months that are like me, her children,
The years that roll obedient to her will,
Have rais'd me from the lowest state to pow'r
And splendor; wherefore, being what I am,
I need not fear the knowledge of my birth.

S C E N E

The son of fortune. The antients call'd all those the sons of fortune, who not knowing their parents, or being of mean extraction, had rais'd themselves by merit to rank and dignity in the state. Horace speaking of himself says

'Luserat in campo fortunæ filius.' Book 2, sat. 6.

The expression is luckily agreeable to our own idiom, and frequently made use of amongst us to convey exactly the same idea. What follows, when OEdipus considers himself as the offspring of time, and calls the months his brethren, is perhaps the *verbum ardens* of Tully, or what the French term, *idée trop hardie*; the situation, however, and circumstances of OEdipus at this time, may render it more excusable.

S C E N E V.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

If my prophetic soul doth well divine,
 E'er on thy brow to-morrow's sun shall shine,
 Cithæron, thou the myst'ry shalt unfold;
 The doubtful OEdipus, no longer blind,
 Shall soon his country and his father find,
 And all the story of his birth be told;
 Then shall we in grateful lays
 Celebrate our monarch's praise,
 And in the sprightly dance our songs triumphant raise.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

What heav'nly pow'r gave birth to thee, O! king?
 From Pan, the god of mountains, did'st thou spring,

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K k

With

If my prophetic soul, &c. OEdipus retreating with the shepherd of Corinth in expectation of the old man, to supply the intermediate space of time, the chorus advances towards the middle of the theatre, probably near the altar of Apollo. As they are inclined throughout to judge favourably of their sovereign, they seem to wish, and almost to believe, that he may be found the son of some divinity. Dacier and doctor Burton observe that 'the strophe and antistrophe coming thus in the middle of the act is something singular and uncommon, but that the chorus in this place do not sing but speak.' With all due deference to the opinion of these learned gentlemen, I cannot, for my own part, see any reason why the strophe and antistrophe should not be sung in this place as well as in any other; this is doubtless the fourth song or intermede of the chorus, but the arbitrary division into acts, for which, as I before observed, there is no foundation, had puzzled the commentators, and forced them to this expedient as the best method of solving the difficulty.

With some fair daughter of Apollo join'd?
 Art thou from him who o'er Cyllene reigns,
 Swift Hermes, sporting in Arcadia's plains?

Some Nymph of Helicon did Bacchus find,
 Bacchus, who delights to rove
 Through the forest, hill and grove,
 And art thou, prince, the offspring of their love?

S C E N E VI.

OEDIPUS, CHORUS, SHEPHERD from CORINTH'

O E D I P U S.

If I may judge of one whom yet I ne'er
 Had converse with, yon old man, whom I see
 This way advancing, must be that same shepherd
 We lately sent for, by his age and mein,
 Ev'n as this stranger did describe him to us;
 My servants too are with him; but you best
 Can say, for you must know him well.

C H O R U S.

'Tis he,
 My lord, the faithful shepherd of king Laius.

O E D I P U S.

[To the shepherd from Corinth.

What say'st thou, stranger, is it he?

S H E P-

If I may judge, &c. OEdipus returns with the shepherd of Corinth; as he comes on the stage, seeing the old shepherd with the attendants at a distance, and advancing towards him, he addresses the chorus.

S H E P H E R D.

It is.

S C E N E VII.

OLD SHEPHERD, OEDIPUS, SHEPHERD from
CORINTH, CHORUS.

O E D I P U S.

Now answer me, old man, look this way, speak,
Didst thou belong to Laius?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Sir, I did,

No hireling slave, but in his palace bred,
I serv'd him long.

O E D I P U S.

What was thy bus'ness there?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

For my life's better part I tended sheep.

O E D I P U S.

And whither didst thou lead them?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

To Citharon,

And to the neighb'ring plains.

O E D I P U S.

Behold this man,

[Pointing to the shepherd of Corinth.

Dost thou remember to have seen him?

K k 2

S H E P

OE D I P U S

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Whom?

What hath he done?

OE D I P U S.

Him, who now stands before thee,
 Call'st thou to mind, or converse or connection
 Between you in times past?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I cannot say

I recollect it now.

S H E P H E R D of Corinth.

I do not wonder

He shou'd forget me, but I will recall
 Some facts of antient date; he must remember
 When on Cithæron we together fed
 Our sev'ral flocks, in daily converse join'd
 From spring to autumn, and when winter bleak
 Approach'd, retir'd; I to my little cot
 Convey'd my sheep, he to the palace led
 His fleecy care; can'st thou remember this?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I do, but that is long long since.

S H E P H E R D of Corinth.

It is;

But

But say, good shepherd, can'st thou call to mind
 An infant, whom thou didst deliver to me,
 Requesting me to breed him as my own?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Ha! wherefore ask'st thou this?

SHEPHERD of Corinth.

[Pointing to OEdipus.

Behold him here,

That very child.

OLD SHEPHERD.

O! say it not, away,

Perdition on thee!

OE D I P U S.

Why reprove him thus?

Thou art thyself to blame, old man.

OLD SHEPHERD.

In what

Am I to blame, my lord?

OE D I P U S.

Thou wilt not speak

Touching this boy.

OLD SHEPHERD.

Alas! poor man, he knows not

What he hath said.

OE D I-

OE D I P U S.

If not by softer means
To be persuaded, force shall wring it from thee.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Treat not an old man harshly.

OE D I P U S. [to the attendants.

Bind his hands.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Wherefore, my lord? what wou'd'st thou have me do?

OE D I P U S.

That child he talks of, didst thou give it to him?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

I did, and wou'd to heav'n I then had dy'd!

OE D I P U S.

Dye soon thou shalt, unless thou tell'st it all.

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Say rather if I do.

OE D I P U S.

'This fellow means
To trifle with us, by his dull delay.

O L D S H E P H E R D,

I do not; said I not I gave the child?

OE D I P U S.

Whence came the boy? was he thy own, or who

Did give him to thee?

OLD SHEPHERD.

From another hand

I had receiv'd him.

OE D I P U S,

Say, what hand? from whom?

Whence came he?

OLD SHEPHERD,

Do not, by the gods I beg thee,

Do not inquire.

OE D I P U S.

Force me to ask again,

And thou shalt dye.

OLD SHEPHERD,

In Laius's palace born——

OE D I P U S,

Son of a slave, or of the king?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Alas!

'Tis death for me to speak.

OE D I P U S.

And me to hear;

Yet say it.

OLD

OLD SHEPHERD:

He was call'd the son of Laius;
But ask the queen, for she can best inform thee.

OE D I P U S.

Did she then give the child to thee?

OLD SHEPHERD.

She did.

OE D I P U S.

For what?

OLD SHEPHERD.

To kill him.

OE D I P U S.

Kill her child! inhuman
And barb'rous mother!

OLD SHEPHERD.

A dire oracle
Affrighted, and constrain'd her to it.

OE D I P U S.

Ha!

What oracle?

OLD SHEPHERD.

Which said, her son shou'd slay
His parents.

OE D I P U S,

O E D I P U S.

Wherefore gav'st thou then the infant
To this old shepherd?

O L D S H E P H E R D.

Pity mov'd me to it:

I hop'd he wou'd have soon convey'd his charge
To some far distant country; he, alas!
Preserv'd him but for misery and woe;
For, O! my lord, if thou indeed art he,
Thou art of all mankind the most unhappy.

O E D I P U S.

O! me! at length the mystery's unravel'd,
'Tis plain; 'tis clear; my fate is all determin'd:
Those are my parents who shou'd not have been
Ally'd to me: she is my wife, ev'n she
Whom nature had forbidden me to wed;
I have slain him who gave me life, and now
Of thee, O! light! I take my last farewell;
For OEdipus shall ne'er behold thee more.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E VIII.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

O! hapless state of human race!
 How quick the fleeting shadows pass
 Of transitory bliss below,
 Where all is vanity and woe!

By thy example taught, O! prince, we see,
 Man was not made for true felicity.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Thou OEdipus, beyond the rest
 Of mortals, wert supremely blest;
 Whom ev'ry hand conspir'd to raise,
 Whom ev'ry hand rejoic'd to praise,
 When from the sphynx thy all-preserving hand
 Stretch'd forth its aid to save a sinking land.

S T R O P H E II.

Thy virtues rais'd thee to a throne,
 And grateful Thebes was all thy own;

Alas!

O! hapless state, &c. This is the fifth and last song or intermede of the chorus, who, convinced of OEdipus's guilt, lament the fate of their unhappy master in the most affecting manner; drawing at the same time, from his example, some moral reflections on the instability of all human happiness, naturally resulting from the subject, and suitable to the occasion. In justice to Sophocles, it may here be observed, that the songs of the chorus throughout this play are not only in every point unexceptionable, but to the last degree beautiful and pathetic.

Alas! how chang'd that glorious name!

Loft are thy virtues, and thy fame;

How cou'dst thou thus pollute thy father's bed!

How cou'dst thou thus thy hapless mother wed!

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

How cou'd that bed unconscious bear

So long the vile incestuous pair!

But time, of quick and piercing sight,

Hath brought the horrid deed to light;

At length Jocasta owns her guilty flame,

And finds a husband and a child the same.

E P O D E.

Wretched son of Laius, thee

Henceforth may I never see,

But absent shed the pious tear,

And weep thy fate with grief sincere!

For thou didst raise our eyes to life and light,

To close them now in everlasting night.

End of A C T IV.

SAGES of Thebes, most honour'd and rever'd,
 If e'er the house of Labdacus was dear
 And precious to you, what will be your grief
 When I shall tell the most difast'rous tale
 You ever heard, and to your eyes present
 A spectacle more dreadful than they yet
 Did e'er behold! not the wide Danube's waves
 Nor Phasis' stream can wash away the stains
 Of this polluted palace; the dire crimes
 Long time conceal'd at length are brought to light;

But

Not the wide Danube's waves, &c. Isther, or the Danube, is one of the most considerable rivers in Europe, which passing by Illyricum runs into the Euxine sea. Phasis was a famous river in Colchis.

The antients imagined that water, and particularly that of fresh or living springs, could cleanse the mind as well as body from pollution; a piece of superstition which seems to have been adopted by the followers of Mahomet, whose frequent washings constitute no inconsiderable part of their religious duty. This calls to mind a similar passage in our English Sophocles, where lady Macbeth, after the murder of Duncan, comes out rubbing her hands, 'out, damn'd spot, out I say; will these hands never be white?—all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'

Shakeſpear's Macbeth.

But those, which spring from voluntary guilt,
Are still more dreadful.

C H O R U S.

Nothing can be worse
Than what we know already; bring'st thou more
Misfortunes to us?

M E S S E N G E R.

To be brief, the queen,
Divine Jocasta's dead.

C H O R U S.

Jocasta dead! say, by what hand?

M E S S E N G E R.

Her own;

And what's more dreadful, no one saw the deed.
What I myself beheld you all shall hear.
Enflam'd with rage, soon as she reach'd the palace,
Instant retiring to the nuptial bed,
She shut the door, then rav'd and tore her hair,
Call'd out on Laius dead, and bade him think
On that unhappy son who murder'd him,

And

Voluntary guilt. Alluding to the actions of OEdipus; the murder and incest committed by him were involuntary crimes; but his anger, impatience, contempt of the gods, and putting out his own eyes, were voluntary, and therefore, as Sophocles observes, more dreadful: doubtless no misfortunes are so bitter and insupportable as those which we bring on ourselves by our own follies.

And stain'd his bed; then turning her sad eyes
 Upon the guilty couch, she curs'd the place
 Where she had borne a husband from her husband,
 And children from her child; what follow'd then
 I know not, by the cries of OEdipus
 Prevented, for on him our eyes were fix'd
 Attentive; forth he came, beseeching us
 To lend him some sharp weapon, and inform him
 Where he might find his mother and his wife,
 His children's wretched mother, and his own:
 Some ill-designing pow'r did then direct him
 (For we were silent) to the queen's apartment,
 Forcing the bolt, he rush'd into the bed,
 And found Jocasta, where we all beheld her,
 Entangled in the fatal noose, which soon
 As he perceiv'd, loosing the pendent rope,

Deeply

Some sharp weapon. OEdipus, in despair, desires them to lend him a sword, or any weapon to destroy himself. Dacier observes on this passage, that it is plain, from hence, that the antients wore no swords except in war, and laughs at Seneca for giving one to OEdipus.

Some ill designing pow'r. 'Τῆς Δαιμον', 'some dæmon'. Brumoy translates it 'quelque noire divinite'. The antients generally attributed evils and misfortunes to some unknown malevolent power.

Loosing the pendent rope. Hanging, though a death much in fashion amongst the antient, being at present so much out of vogue, and entirely banish'd from our stage, since the introduction of sword and poison, it is perhaps difficult for a translator to render this passage closely without offence to the delicacy of modern ears. My readers must however excuse the common and vulgar expressions, as I could not alter the manner of Jocasta's death without an unpardonable deviation from the original.

Deeply he groan'd, and casting on the ground
 His wretched body, shew'd a piteous sight
 To the beholders, on a sudden thence
 Starting, he pluck'd from off the robe she wore
 A golden buckle that adorn'd her side,
 And bury'd in his eyes the sharpen'd point,
 Crying, he ne'er again wou'd look on her,
 Never wou'd see his crimes or mis'ries more,
 Or those whom guiltless he cou'd ne'er behold,
 Or those to whom he now must sue for aid;
 His lifted eye-lids then, repeating still
 These dreadful plaints, he tore; whilst down his cheek
 Fell show'rs of blood: such fate the wretched pair
 Sustain'd, partakers in calamity,
 Fall'n from a state of happiness (for none
 Were happier once than they) to groans, and death,
 Reproach and shame, and ev'ry human woe.

C H O R U S.

And where is now the poor unhappy man?

M E S S E N G E R.

Open the doors, he cries, and let all Thebes
 Behold his parents murth'rer, adding words

Not

Or those whom guiltless, &c. Meaning his children, whom he could not look on without the terrible recollection of his own guilt.

Or those to whom, &c. Meaning either his children, or Creon, to whom he applies in the last scene.

Not to be utter'd; banish'd now, he says,
 He must be, nor, devoted as he is
 By his own curse, remain in this sad place:
 He wants a kind conductor and a friend
 To help him now, for 'tis too much to bear.
 But you will see him soon, for lo! the doors
 Are open'd, and you will behold a sight
 That wou'd to pity move his deadliest foe.

S C E N E II.

OEDIPUS, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

O! horrid sight! more dreadful spectacle
 Than e'er these eyes beheld! what madness urg'd thee
 To this sad deed? what pow'r malignant heap'd
 On thy poor head such complicated woe?
 Unhappy man! alas! I wou'd have held

Some

O! horrid sight! Here, we must suppose, the back scene opens, and discovers OEdipus blind, and in the most miserable condition, advancing slowly towards the front of the stage; the chorus, shock'd at so moving a spectacle, turn their eyes from him: the appearance of OEdipus in this place, was indeed extremely hazardous, as it would have been difficult for a writer of less abilities than Sophocles to make him speak with propriety, and say neither more nor less than he ought. Let the reader compare this simple and pathetic scene with the bombast of the turgid Seneca, who is, to the last degree tedious, in his awkward imitation of it.

Complicated woe. Dacier calls it 'a deluge of misfortunes.' In the original it is, 'evils greater than the greatest evils,' which, how beautiful soever it may be in Greek, would not admit of a literal translation.

Some converse with thee, but thy looks affright me;
I cannot bear to speak to thee.

OE D I P U S.

O! me!

Where am I? and whence comes the voice I hear?
Where art thou, fortune?

C H O R U S.

Chang'd to misery,
Dreadful to hear, and dreadful to behold.

OE D I P U S.

O! cruel darkness! endless, hopeless night,
Shame, terrors, and unutterable woe!
More painful is the mem'ry of my crimes
Than all the wounds my wi'd distraction made.

C H O R U S.

Thus doubly curs'd, O! prince, I wonder not
At thy affliction,

OE D I P U S.

Art thou here, my friend,
I know thy voice; thou wou'dst not leave the wretched;
Thou art my faithful, kind assistant still.

C H O R U S.

How cou'dst thou thus deprive thyself of fight!
What madness drove thee to the desp'rate deed?

What god inspir'd?

OE D I P U S.

Apollo was the cause;
 He was, my friends, the cause of all my woes;
 But for these eyes, myself did quench their light;
 I want not them; what use were they to me,
 But to discover scenes of endless woe!

C H O R U S.

'Tis but too true.

OE D I P U S.

What pleasure now remains
 For OEdipus? he cannot joy in aught
 To fight or ear delightful. Curse on him,
 Whoe'er he was, that loosen'd my bound feet,
 And sav'd me, in Cithæron's vale, from death;
 I owe him nothing: had I perish'd then,
 Much happier had it been for you, my friends,
 And for myself.

C H O R U S.

I too cou'd wish thou had'st.

OE D I P U S.

I shou'd not then have murther'd Laius; then

I

Apollo was the cause. By delivering the oracle, which foretold that OEdipus should kill his father, and afterwards pronouncing the dreadful sentence against the murtherer.

I had not ta'en Jocaſta to my bed;
 But now I am a guilty wretch, the ſon
 Of a polluted mother, father now
 To my own brothers, all that's horrible
 To nature is the lot of OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Yet muſt I blame this cruel act, for ſure
 The loſs of fight is worſe than death itſelf.

O E D I P U S.

I care not for thy counſel, or thy praiſe;
 For with what eyes cou'd I have e'er beheld
 My honour'd father in the ſhades below,
 Or my unhappy mother, both deſtroy'd
 By me? this puniſhment is worſe than death,
 And ſo it ſhou'd be: ſweet had been the fight
 Of my dear children, them I cou'd have wiſh'd
 To gaze upon; but I muſt never ſee
 Or them, or this fair city, or the palace
 Where I was born; depriv'd of ev'ry bliſs
 By my own lips, which doom'd to baniſhment
 The murderer of Laius, and expell'd

M m 2

The

In the ſhades below. It appears, from this paſſage, that the Greeks imagined the body after death would remain exactly in the ſame ſtate as before. OEdipus believed that his blindneſs would continue, when he was removed to the ſhades below. The ſame opinion, we know, prevail'd with regard to the mind alſo.

The impious wretch, by gods and men accurs'd:
 Could I behold them after this? O! no!
 Would I cou'd now with equal ease remove
 My hearing too, be deaf as well as blind,
 And from another entrance shut out woe!
 To want our senses, in the hour of ill,
 Is comfort to the wretched. O! Cithæron,
 Why didst thou e'er receive me, or receiv'd,
 Why not destroy, that men might never know
 Who gave me birth? O! Polybus, O! Corinth,
 And thou, long time believ'd, my father's palace,
 O! what a foul disgrace to human nature
 Didst thou receive beneath a prince's form!
 Impious myself, and from an impious race,
 Where is my splendor now? O! Daulian path,
 The shady forest, and the narrow pass
 Where three ways meet, who drank a father's blood,
 Shed by these hands; do you not still remember
 The horrid deed, and what, when here I came,
 Follow'd more dreadful? fatal nuptials, you

Produc'd

My father's palace. That is, the palace of Polybus, king of Corinth, the supposed father of OEdipus, who brought him up as his own, and educated him accordingly.

Fatal nuptials, &c. ' Plurals, (says Longinus in the 19th chapter of his treatise on the sublime) impart a greater magnificence to the stile, and by the

Produc'd me, you return'd me to the womb
 That bare me; thence relations horrible
 Of fathers, fons and brothers came; of wives,
 Sisters and mothers, sad alliance! all
 That man holds impious and detestable.
 But what in act is vile, the modest tongue
 Shou'd never name: bury me, hide me, friends,
 From ev'ry eye; destroy me, cast me forth
 To the wide ocean, let me perish there;
 Do any thing to shake off hated life;
 Seize me, approach, my friends, you need not fear,
 Polluted tho' I am to touch me; none
 Shall suffer for my crimes but I alone.

C H O R U S.

' the copiousness of number, give it more emphasis and grace; so the words of
 ' OEdipus in Sophocles.' [Here follows the passage] ' all these terms (continues
 ' the great critic) denote on the one side OEdipus only, and on the other
 ' Jocasta: but the number, thrown into the plural, seems to multiply the mis-
 ' fortunes of that unfortunate pair, and excite greater and more elevated ideas.'

See Smyth's excellent translation of Longinus, p. 61.

But what in act &c. OEdipus is going on, but stops short, as if shock'd at
 the bare repetition of his crime, which produces this moral reflection; the sen-
 timent is adopted by Publius Syrus,

' Quod facere turpe est; dicere ne honestum puta.'

You need not fear. Alluding to a superstitious notion amongst the antients,
 that it was dangerous even to touch an accursed person, or one seemingly vi-
 sited with misfortunes by the gods. In the OEdipus Coloneus, we find this
 religious fear still more strongly impress'd on the minds of all that come near
 that unfortunate exile.

C H O R U S.

In most fit time, my lord, the noble Creon
 This way advances; he can best determine
 And best advise; sole guardian now of Thebes,
 To him thy pow'r devolves.

OE D I P U S.

What shall I say?

Can I apply to him for aid, whom late
 I deeply injur'd by unjust suspicion?

S C E N E III.

C R E O N, O E D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C R E O N.

I come not, prince, to triumph o'er thy woes
 With vile reproach; I pity thy misfortunes;
 But, O! my Thebans, if you do not fear
 The censure of your fellow-citizens,
 At least respect the all-creating eye
 Of Phœbus, who beholds you thus exposing
 To public view a wretch accurs'd, polluted,
 Whom neither earth can bear, nor sun behold,
 Nor holy show'r besprinkle: take him hence,

Within

Holy show'r. This refers to the curse pronounced by OEdipus himself on the murderer of Laius, in the first scene of the second act. It was customary (as is observed in a note on the passage) for the priests to sprinkle water on those

Within the palace; those, who are by blood
 United, shou'd alone be witnesses
 Of such calamity.

OE D I P U S.

O! Creon, thou

The best of men, and I the worst; how kind
 Thou art to visit me! O! by the gods
 Let me entreat thee, since beyond my hopes
 Thou art so good, now hear me; what I ask
 Concerns thee most.

C R E O N.

What is it thou desir'st

Thus ardently?

OE D I P U S.

I beg thee, banish me

From Thebes this moment, to some land remote,
 Where I may ne'er converse with man again.

C R E O N.

those who assisted at the sacrifice, and sometimes, probably, in such abundance as might properly be call'd 'a show'r;' this custom of purification we find practis'd in other places as well as Greece, and alluded to in scripture: 'then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness.' Ezek. 36, v. 25. 'Let us draw near (says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews) having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies wash'd with pure water.' Heb. 10, v. 22.

C R E O N.

Myself long since had done it, but the gods
Must be consulted first.

O E D I P U S.

Their will is known
Already, and their oracle declar'd
The guilty parricide shou'd dye.

C R E O N.

It hath ;
But, as it is, 'twere better to enquire
What must be done.

O E D I P U S.

For such a wretch as me
Wou'dst thou again explore the will of heav'n?

C R E O N.

Thy hapless fate shou'd teach us to believe,
And reverence the gods.

O E D I P U S.

Now, Creon, list ;
I beg thee, I conjure thee, let a tomb

Be

The gods must be consulted. As Creon was next heir to the crown of Thebes, if he had, on the conviction of OEdipus's guilt, immediately put in execution the sentence against him without farther consultation of the oracle, it might have been attributed to his impatient desire of succeeding to the kingdom : this would in some measure have stain'd the purity of his character, which Sophocles has represented as blameless and unpotted throughout this whole drama, though he has taken the liberty to change it in another.

Be rais'd, and all due honours paid to her
Who lies within; she was thy sister, Creon;
It is a duty which thou ow'st: for me,
I cannot hope this city now will deign
To keep me here; O! Creon, let me go,
And seek the solitary mountain's top,
My own Cithæron, by my parents doom'd
Long since to be the grave of OEdipus;
There wou'd I dye, as they decreed I shou'd:
Alas! I cannot, must not perish yet,
Till I have suffer'd evils worse than death,
For I was only sav'd to be unhappy.
But I must meet my fate, whate'er it be.
My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune
May place them, cannot want the means of life;
They shall not burthen thee; but, O! my friend,
What will become of my unhappy daughters;
With tend'rest love, beneath a father's hand,
Cherish'd so long? O take them to thy care,
Thou best of men! O! might I but embrace them,
But shed a tear o'er their disastrous fate,
Might I be suffer'd but to touch them here,
I shou'd rejoice, and think I saw them still.
But hark! methinks even now I hear the voice

Of my dear daughters; hath the gracious Creon,
 In pity to my woes, already brought
 My children to me; is it so?

C R E O N.

It is;

Thy wishes are prevented; they are here.

S C E N E IV.

DAUGHTERS of OEDIPUS, OEDIPUS, CREON,
 C H O R U S.

O E D I P U S.

May heav'n reward thee for this goodness to me,
 And give thee much more bliss than I have known!
 Now, my dear children, come towards me, come
 Towards your father and your—brother; see
 These sightless eyes, pierc'd by my own mad hands;
 Behold that wretched father who begat you
 Unknowingly on her who gave me birth;
 I cannot see you now, I can but weep
 Your fate, to think what hours of wretchedness

You

Now, my dear children, &c. The passions of terror and pity were never more effectually or more judiciously raised than in this tragedy: that horror which the spectators must feel at the crimes of OEdipus, is finely contrasted by this pathetic address to his daughters, which excites the warmest compassion for his misfortunes, and creates in the minds of the audience that piety and submission to the will of the gods, which the whole drama is visibly design'd to inculcate:

You have to know hereafter: whither now
Must my poor children fly? from ev'ry feast
Joyless with grief and shame shall you return;
And when the time shall come, when riper years
Shou'd give you to the nuptial bed, who then,
Careless of fame, will let his child partake
The infamy of my abhorred race,
Sprang from a wretch accurs'd, who kill'd his father,
And from the womb that bare him did beget
You my unhappy daughters? such reproach
Must still be yours, to virgin solitude
Devoted ever, and a barren bed.
Son of Menœceus, thou alone art left
Their father now, for O! Jocasta's dead,
And I am—nothing; do not then forsake
Thy kindred; nor, deserted and forlorn,
Suffer them still, in penury and woe,
To wander helpless, in their tender age:
Remember, they have no support but thee.
O! gen'rous prince, have pity on them, give me
Thy friendly hand in promise of thy aid.
To you, my daughters, had your early years
Permitted, I had giv'n my last advice;
Too young for counsel, all I ask of you

Is but to pray the gods that my sad life
 May not be long, but yours, my children, crown'd
 With many days, and happier far than mine.

C R E O N.

It is enough; go in, thy grief transports thee
 Beyond all bounds.

OE D I P U S.

'Tis hard, but I submit.

C R E O N.

The time demands it, therefore go.

OE D I P U S.

O! Creon,

Know'ft thou what now I wish?

C R E O N.

What is it? speak.

OE D I P U S.

That I may quit this fatal place.

C R E O N.

Thou ask'ft

What heav'n alone can grant.

OE D I P U S.

Alas! to heav'n

I am most hateful.

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

Yet shalt thou obtain

What thou desir'st.

O E D I P U S.

Shall I indeed?

C R E O N.

Thou shalt;

I never say aught that I do not mean.

O E D I P U S.

'Then let me go; may I depart?

C R E O N.

Thou may'st;

But leave thy children.

O E D I P U S.

Do not take them from me.

C R E O N.

Leave thy children. Dacier judiciously observes on this passage, that every thing dreadful was to be fear'd from the violent temper and unfortunate condition of OEdipus. Creon was probably apprehensive, that in the height of despair he might destroy his children; he prudently, therefore, keeps them from him. To which remark it may be added, that OEdipus had but just before deliver'd his daughters to the care of Creon, who had consequently a right to dispose of them as he thought proper. Mr. Boivin finds fault with the behaviour of Creon on this occasion; he makes no scruple of condemning the two last scenes as spurious, calls the speech of OEdipus to his daughters, 'lamentation indigne d'un grand personnage,' and accuses him of 'une bizarre changement d'humeur & de caractere. He makes, at the same time, several other severe, but ill-founded reflections, on the conduct of the drama, which seem to have arisen partly from his ignorance of Grecian manners, and partly from misunderstanding the sense of the original; mistakes, which it were easy to point out; but I refer my readers to the criticism itself, which they will find in the 9th vol. of the Histoire de l'Academie des inscriptions, &c. 4^{to} p. 372.

C R E O N.

Thou must not always have thy will; already
Thou'lt suffer'd for it.

C H O R U S.

Thebans, now behold
The great, the mighty OEdipus, who once
The Sphynx's dark ænigma cou'd unfold;
Who less to fortune than to wisdom ow'd;
In virtue as in rank to all superior,
Yet fall'n at last to deepest misery.
Let mortals hence be taught to look beyond
The present time, nor dare to say, a man
Is happy, till the last decisive hour
Shall close his life without the taste of woe.

Let mortals hence, &c. This sentiment is originally attributed to the wise law-giver Solon, and said to have been spoken by him to Cræsus. Ovid has turn'd it thus,

—ultima semper,

Expectanda dies homini, dicique beatus

Ante obitum nemo, supremaque funera debet.

Mr. Boivin positively asserts that these lines do not belong to Sophocles, but were foisted in by some transcriber: he calls them 'une moralité fade, usée, & triviale, un lieu commun, qui convient indifféremment à la plupart des sujets tragiques,' 'a piece of insipid, trite and trivial morality, a common place, suited equally to almost any tragedy.' In spite of this severe censure, I cannot but be of opinion that the moral is here introduced with the utmost propriety, and though it may indeed be applied to other subjects, seems peculiarly adapted to this, as it could never be better exemplified and illustrated, than by the story of OEdipus in the preceding drama; a performance which reflects the highest honour on its author, being perhaps, consider'd in every light, his most finish'd work, and the chef-d'œuvre of antiquity.

F I N I S.



OE D I P U S

CO L O N E U S.



Dramatis Personæ.

OE D I P U S,

CREON,

ANTIGONE,

ISMENE,

} Daughters of OEdipus,

POLYNICES, Son of OEdipus,

THESEUS, King of Athens,

An ATHENIAN,

MESSENGER,

ATTENDANTS on Creon, Theseus and Ismene.

CHORUS

Composed of ANTIENT MEN of Thebes.

SCENE

A grove, at the entrance to the temple of the Furies.

OE D I P U S

C O L O N E U S.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

OE D I P U S, A N T I G O N E.

OE D I P U S.

W H E R E are we now, my dear Antigone?

Know'st thou the place? Will any here afford

Their scanty alms to a poor wanderer,

The banish'd OEdipus? I ask not much,

V O L. II.

O o

Yet

Where are we now, &c. This tragedy is a continuation of the history of OEdipus, who, condemn'd to perpetual banishment, is supposed to have wander'd from city to city, and to arrive at last, conducted by his daughter Antigone, at Colonus, a little hill, not far from Athens, where was a temple and grove sacred to the furies, or, as they are stiled, the venerable goddesses. The subject is extremely simple, containing little more than a narration of the principal and most remarkable circumstances attending the death of OEdipus. To taste the beauties of this piece, it is absolutely necessary that the reader have an eye throughout both to the political and religious state of Greece, and the time of its appearance on the stage. Valerius Maximus informs us that Sophocles

Yet less receive; but I am satisfy'd:
 Long time hath made my woes familiar to me,
 And I have learn'd to bear calamity.
 But tell me, daughter, if thou see'st a place
 Or sacred, or profane, where I may rest,
 There set me down, from some inhabitant
 A chance but we may learn where now we are,
 And act, so strangers ought, as he directs us.

A N T I G O N E.

O! OEdipus, my poor unhappy father,
 Far as my eyes can reach, I see a city,
 With lofty turrets crown'd, and, if I err not,
 This place is sacred, by the laurel shade
 Olive and vine thick-planted, and the songs

Of

cles wrote it when he was near a hundred years of Age, and prefers it, for what reason I know not, to all his tragedies. Cicero also, who was a much more competent judge, seems to have been highly pleas'd with it, and has left us the following remarkable anecdote concerning it, viz. That Sophocles wrote tragedies even in extreme old age; bestowing so much attention on them as totally to neglect every thing else; insomuch that his sons summon'd him before the judges as an idiot and dotard, utterly incapable of acting for himself; and requesting, that the administration of his affairs might be taken from him and put into their hands: the old man appear'd in-court to defend himself against the accusation, and producing the tragedy of OEdipus Coloneus, which he had just then finish'd, ask'd the judges if that appear'd to be the work of an idiot. The piece was read, and applauded, the sons petition rejected with derision, and Sophocles acquitted with honour. We know not what authority Tully had for this story; it may not, however, be amiss to observe, that the bitter accusations against his sons, which the poet hath put into the mouth of OEdipus, seem to confirm the truth of it.

Of nightingales sweet-warbling thro' the grove;
 Here fet thee down, and rest thy weary'd limbs
 On this rude stone; 'tis a long way for age
 Like thine to travel.

OE D I P U S.

Place me here, and guard

A fightless wretch.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! at such a time

Thou need'st not tell Antigone her duty.

OE D I P U S.

Know'st thou not where we are?

A N T I G O N E.

As I have learn'd

From passing travellers, not far from Athens;
 The place I know not; wou'd you that I go
 And strait enquire? but now I need not leave thee,
 For, lo! a stranger comes this way, ev'n now
 He stands before you, he will soon inform us.

S C E N E II.

An A T H E N I A N, OE D I P U S, A N T I G O N E.

OE D I P U S.

Stranger, thou com'st in happy hour to tell us
 What much we wish to know; let me then ask thee—

A T H E N I A N.

Ask nothing; speak not till thou art remov'd
From off that hallow'd spot, where now thou stand'st,
By human footsteps not to be profan'd.

O E D I P U S.

To whom then is it sacred?

A T H E N I A N.

'Tis a place
Where but to tread is impious, and to dwell
Forbidden; where the dreadful goddesses,
Daughters of earth and night, alone inhabit.

O E D I P U S.

Ha! let me hear their venerable names.

A T H E N I A N.

By other names in other climes ador'd,

The

Speak not, &c. Amongst the antients not only the temples and altars of their deities, but also the groves, forests and vineyards adjoining to them were esteem'd sacred; insomuch that it was held impious and unlawful for any but the priests to enter into them: the Athenian stranger, therefore, will not converse with OEdipus till he is removed from that forbidden spot, where he had placed himself, into the public path.

The dreadful goddesses. These dreadful, or venerable goddesses, were the three furies, Alecto, Megæra, and Tisiphone; daughters, as Sophocles tells us, of earth and night; or, according to other poetical genealogists, of Nox and Acheron, supposed to be the avengers of impiety; as such altars and temples were erected to them. Those, who are inclined to allegorise the pagan mythology, easily transform them into the flings of conscience, which tormented OEdipus.

The natives here call them Eumenides,
Th' all-seeing pow'rs.

OE D I P U S.

O! that they wou'd but smile
Propitious, and receive a suppliant's pray'r,
That I might never leave this blest abode!

A T H E N I A N.

What dost thou mean?

OE D I P U S.

It suits my sorrows well.

A T H E N I A N.

I must inform the citizens; till then
Remain.

OE D I P U S.

O! do not scorn a wretched exile,
But tell me, stranger.—

A T H E N I A N.

Speak; I scorn thee not.

OE D I P U S.

What place is this?

A T H E N I A N.

I'll tell thee what I know.

This place is sacred all: great Neptune here

Presides,

Great Neptune, &c. Neptune is reported by the poets to have struck the earth with his trident, which immediately produced a horse: in allusion to this, Colonus, where he was worship'd, is call'd the Equestrian hill.

Prefides, and he who bears the living fire,
 Titan Prometheus; where thou tread'st, is call'd
 The brazen way, the bulwark of our state:
 From this equestrian hill, their safest guard,
 The neighb'ring villagers their gen'ral name
 Derive, thence call'd Colonians all.

O E D I P U S.

But say,

Are there, who dwell here then?

A T H E N I A N.

There are, and call'd

From him they worship.

O E D I P U S.

Is the pow'r supreme

Lodg'd in the people's voice, or in the king?

A T H E N I A N.

'Tis in the king,

O E D I P U S.

Titan Prometheus. Prometheus, according to the tales of the heathens concerning him, was supposed to have stolen fire from heaven, and with it to have made men, or, according to the satirical Lucian, which was more criminal, women; for which impiety he was punish'd by the gods in the same manner as the rebellious Titans: he is therefore call'd in this place Titan Prometheus.

The brazen way. Near this brazen way was supposed to be the passage to Hades, or the shades, by which Pluto convey'd the ravish'd Proserpine to his dominions. Some imagine it was so call'd from the brazen mines abounding in that neighbourhood: it was most probably a kind of bridge, or narrow pass for travellers, and lay between the two parts of the sacred grove, from which the Athenian stranger calls to OEdipus.

OE D I P U S.

Who is he?

A T H E N I A N.

Theseus, son

Of AEgeus, their last sov'reign.

OE D I P U S.

Who will go,

And tell him—

A T H E N I A N.

What, to come and meet thee here?

OE D I P U S.

To tell him that a little help bestow'd

Wou'd amply be repay'd.

A T H E N I A N.

Why, what cou'dst thou do,

Dark as thou art?

OE D I P U S.

My words will not be so.

A T H E N I A N.

Then mark me, that thou err not; for to me

Thy fortune seems ill-suited to thy nature,

Which is most noble; therefore stay thou here

Till I return, I will not go to Athens,

But

But ask these villagers, who sojourn here,
If thou may'st stay.

[Exit Athenian.]

S C E N E III.

O E D I P U S, A N T I G O N E.

O E D I P U S.

My daughter, is he gone?

A N T I G O N E.

He is, and thou may'st safely speak, for I
Alone am with thee.

O E D I P U S.

Goddesſes rever'd!

Since in your ſeats my weary'd ſteps have found
Their firſt reſt, not inauspicious ſmile
On Phœbus and on me! for know, the god
Who 'gainſt unhappy OEdipus denounc'd

Unnumber'd

Goddeſſes rever'd, &c. One would not imagine that this play, from the apparent ſimplicity and barrenneſs of the fable, which promiſes no more than an account of the death of a poor old man in an obſcure corner of the earth, could poſſibly produce any incidents that would pleaſe or inſtruct; Sophocles has, notwithstanding, ſo contriv'd as to make the buſineſs of this play extremely intereſting to an Athenian audience. OEdipus, as ſoon as he is inform'd where he is, addreſſes himſelf in the moſt ſolemn manner to the deities of the place, recollecting an oracle which ſince his baniſhment has declared to him, that this ſpot would put a period to all his woes. We ſhall perceive that the hero of the drama becomes every moment of more and more conſequence, and that no leſs than the ſafety and proſperity of a whole kingdom depends on this ſeemingly accidental and inſignificant circumſtance.

Unnumber'd woes, foretold that here at last
 I shou'd have rest, within this hallow'd grove
 These hospitable shades, and finish here
 A life of mis'ry: happy those, he said,
 Who shou'd receive me, glorious their reward,
 And woe to them who strove to drive me hence
 Inhuman; this he promis'd to confirm
 By signs undoubted; thunder, or the sound
 Of dreadful earthquake, or the light'ning's blast
 Launch'd from the arm of Jove; I doubt it not,
 From you some happy omen hither led
 My prosp'rous steps, that first to you I came
 Pure to the pure; and here on this rude seat
 Repos'd me, cou'd not be the work of chance;
 Wherefore, ye pow'rs! as Phœbus hath decreed,
 Here let me find a period of my woes!
 Here end my wretched life! unless the man,
 Who long hath groan'd beneath the bitt'rest ills
 That mortals feel, still seem to merit more.
 Daughters of Antient Night! O! hear me now!
 And thou, from great Minerva call'd, the best
 And noblest city, Athens! pity me;

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P p

Pity

Pure to the pure. In the original it is 'sober to the sober,' alluding to the sacrifices offer'd to the furies, in which wine was never us'd; because, says doctor Potter, the divine justice ought always to be chaste, sober and vigilant.

Pity the shadow of poor OEdipus !
 For, O ! I am not what I was.

A N T I G O N E.

No more :

Behold a venerable band approach
 Of antient natives, come perchance to seek thee.

O E D I P U S.

I've done ; Antigone, remove me hence,
 And hide me in the grove, till by their words,
 Lift'ning I learn their purpose ; such foreknowledge
 Will best direct us how to act hereafter.

[Exeunt.

S C E N E IV.

C H O R U S.

Where is he ? look, examine, search around
 For this abandon'd exile, of mankind,
 The most profane, doubtless some wretched stranger ;
 Who else had dar'd on this forbidden soil
 To tread ? where dwell the dreadful deities
 We tremble ev'n to name, and as we pass

Dare

Where is he ? This is the first appearance of the chorus, who being acquainted by the Athenian traveller that there was a man in the sacred grove, alarm'd at such presumption and impiety, enter in search of OEdipus, who had retired with Antigone to the inner part of the wood. In this, and the following scene, the reader must enter into, and make allowance for the follies of Pagan superstition.

Dare not behold, but filently revere,
 Or soft with words of fairest omen greet.
 Of these regardless here we come to find
 An impious wretch; I look around the grove,
 But still he lurks unseen.

S C E N E V:

OE D I P U S, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

OE D I P U S.

Behold me here;

For by your words I find you look for me.

C H O R U S. [looking stedfastly at him.

Dreadful his voice, and terrible his aspect!

OE D I P U S.

I am no outlaw; do not look thus on me.

C H O R U S.

Jove the defender! who is this old man?

OE D I P U S.

One on whom fortune little hath bestow'd

To call for rev'rence from you; that, alas!

P p 2

Is

Behold me here. OEdipus and Antigone, overhearing the words of the chorus, and apprehensive of being soon discover'd by them, leave their retreat, and re-enter the stage.

No out-law. The word out-law, though not very poetical, seems the best which our language can afford to express the precise meaning of 'αὐτοματός;' one whom the laws of his country had expell'd from all the benefits and privileges of society.

Is but too plain ; thus by another's eyes
 Conducted here, and on her aid depending,
 Old as I am.

C H O R U S.

Alas ! and wert thou born
 Thus fightless ? full of sorrow and of years
 Indeed thou seem'st ; but do not let on us
 Thy curse devolve ; thou hast transgress'd the bound
 Prescrib'd to mortals ; shun this hallow'd grove,
 Where on the grassy surface, to the pow'rs
 A welcome off'ring, flows with honey mix'd
 The limpid stream ; unhappy stranger, hence,
 Away, begone : thou see'st 'tis a long space
 Divides us : dost thou hear me, wretched exile ?
 This instant, if thou dost, depart, then speak,
 But not before.

OE D I P U S.

Antigone, my daughter,
 What's to be done ?

A N T I G O N E.

Obey the citizens ;
 Give me thy hand.

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

I will ; and now, my friends,
 Confiding thus in you, and thus removing
 As you directed, let me not be injur'd.

C H O R U S.

Thou shalt not ; be assur'd that thou art safe ;
 None shall offend or drive thee hence.

O E D I P U S.

Yet more

Must I approach ?

C H O R U S.

A little farther still.

O E D I P U S.

Will this suffice ?

C H O R U S.

Remove him this way, virgin ;

Thou hear'st us.

A N T I G O N E.

Thou must follow me, my father,
 Weak as thou art ; we are unhappy strangers,
 And must submit ; what e'er the city hates

Content

And now my friends, &c. Here we must suppose, that OEdipus, with the assistance of his daughter, moves a little way from the place where he first stood ; but the chorus, perceiving that he is still on part of the holy ground, will not converse with him till he is entirely removed to a stone at the extremity of it, which probably lay in the public road.

Content to hate, and what she loves to love.

OE D I P U S.

Lead me, my daughter, to some hallow'd spot
For mutual converse fit, nor let us strive
With dire necessity.

C H O R U S.

Stop there, nor move

Beyond that stone.

OE D I P U S.

Thus then?

C H O R U S.

It is enough.

OE D I P U S.

Where shou'd I sit?

C H O R U S.

A little forward lean,

And rest thee there.

A N T I G O N E. [taking hold of him.

Alas! 'tis my sad office,

Let me perform it, to direct thy steps;

To this lov'd hand commit thy aged limbs;

I will be careful.

[She seats him on the stone.

OE D I P U S.

O! unhappy state!

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Now, wretched stranger, tell us who thou art,
Thy country, and thy name.

O E D I P U S.

Alas! my lords,

A poor abandon'd exile, but, O! do not—

C H O R U S.

What say'st thou?

O E D I P U S.

Do not ask me who I am;

Enquire no farther.

C H O R U S.

Wherefore?

O E D I P U S.

My sad race——

C H O R U S.

Speak on.

O E D I P U S. [turning to Antigone.

My daughter, how shall I proceed?

C H O R U S.

Thy race, thy father——

O E D I P U S.

O! Antigone,

What do I suffer?

A N T I G O N E.

Speak, thou canst not be
More wretched than thou art.

OE D I P U S.

I will, for, O!

It cannot be conceal'd.

C H O R U S.

You do delay;

Inform us strait.

OE D I P U S.

Know you the son of Laius?

C H O R U S.

Alas!

OE D I P U S.

The race of Labdacus.

C H O R U S.

O! Jove!

OE D I P U S.

Th' unhappy OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Th' unhappy OEdipus. OEdipus stammers, hesitates, and is, with the utmost difficulty, brought to discover himself to the chorus; who, agreeably to his apprehensions, are so shock'd and terrified when they know who he is, that they are even about to retract their promise of favour and protection, which they had just made to him. They seem afraid that his guilt was contagious; and that a man so accursed, would bring down upon them the wrath of the gods; till mollified by his predictions of future advantages to their country, they relent.

C H O R U S.

And art thou he?

O E D I P U S.

Be not affrighted at my words.

C H O R U S.

O! heav'n!

O E D I P U S.

Wretch that I am! what will become of me?

C H O R U S.

Away, begone, fly from this place.

O E D I P U S.

Then where

Are all your promises? are they forgotten?

C H O R U S.

Justice divine will never punish those
 Who but repay the inj'ry they receive;
 And fraud doth merit fraud for it's reward.
 Wherefore, begone, and leave us, left once more
 Our city be compell'd to force thee hence.

A N T I G O N E.

O! my kind friends, as you revere the name
 Of virtue, tho' you will not hear the pray'rs
 Of my unhappy father, worn with age,
 And laden with involuntary crimes;

Yet hear the daughter pleading for her fire,
 And pity her, who with no evil eye
 Beholds you, but, as one of the same race,
 Born of one common father, here entreats
 Your mercy to th' unhappy, for on you,
 As on some god alone, we must rely ;
 Then grant this wish'd-for boon, O ! grant it now,
 By all that's dear to thee, thy sacred word,
 Thy interest, thy children, and thy god ;
 'Tis not in mortals to avoid the crime
 Which heav'n hath pre-ordain'd.

C H O R U S.

We pity thee,

Daughter of OEdipus ; we pity him,
 And his misfortunes ; but, of wrath divine
 Still fearful, dare not alter our decree.

O E D I P U S.

Now who shall trust to glory and fair fame ?
 What shall it profit, that your pious city
 Was once for hospitable rites renown'd,
 That she alone wou'd pity and relieve

Th'

Your pious city. In this, and many other passages of the OEdipus Coloneus Sophocles takes occasion to compliment his countrymen the Athenians, and more particularly the inhabitants of Coloneus ; which is supposed to have been the place of his nativity.

Th' afflicted stranger? is she so to me
Who drives me hence, and trembles at a name?
Me you can never fear, and for my crimes
I am the sufferer, not th' offender: what
Touching my father I have spoke, alas!
If 'tis for that you do abhor me thus,
Was I to blame? the injury receiv'd
I but repay'd, and therefore had I known
The crime I acted, I were guiltless still:
Whither I came, I came unknowingly;
Not so they acted who have banish'd me.
By your commands already here remov'd,
O! by the gods, preserve, assist me now;
If you revere them, do not thus despise
What they decree, their eyes behold the good
And view the evil man, nor shall the wicked
Escape their wrath: use not their sacred names
To cover crimes, and stain the fame of Athens:
As you receiv'd the suppliant, O! remember
Your plighted faith, preserve me, save me now;
Look not contemptuous on this wretched form,
Or cast reproach unmerited; I come
Nor impious, nor prophane; and with me bring
To Athens much of profit and renown,

As when your king arrives, you all shall know;
Mean time despise me not.

C H O R U S.

Old man, thy words
Are full of weight, and merit our observance;
If those who here preside but know thy purpose,
It doth suffice.

OE D I P U S.

But say, where is the king?

C H O R U S.

Within his palace; but a messenger
Is gone to fetch him hither.

OE D I P U S.

O! my friends,
Think you a fightless wretch like me will move
His pity or his care, that he will come?

C H O R U S.

Most readily, when he shall hear the name
Of OEdipus.

OE D I P U S.

And who shall tell it him?

C H O R U S.

The journey's long; but passing travellers
Will catch the tale, and he must hear it soon;

Fear not, thy story is already known
 On ev'ry side, 'twill quicken his slow steps,
 And bring him instant hither.

O E D I P U S.

May he come

In happy hour to Athens and to me!
 He will; what good man doth not love his country?

A N T I G O N E.

O! Jove! what shall I say or think? my father—

O E D I P U S.

What says my daughter?

A N T I G O N E.

This way bent, behold

On a Sicilian steed, a woman comes,
 Her face conceal'd by a Theffalian veil,
 To shield her from the sun; am I deceiv'd,
 Or, is it she? I know not what to think.
 It is my sister, now she smiles upon me;
 It must, it can be none but my Ismene.

O E D I P U S.

Who, my Antigone?

A N T I G O N E.

It is thy daughter,
 My sister; but her voice will soon convince you.

S C E N E

S C E N E VI.

ISMENE and Attendant, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,
C H O R U S.

I S M E N E.

O! the sweet sounds! a father and a sister!
What pains have I not suffer'd in the search?
And now for grief can scarce behold you.

O E D I P U S.

Oh!

My daughter, art thou here?

I S M E N E.

Alas! my father,

How terribly thou look'st!

O E D I P U S.

From the same blood

The father and the daughter.

I S M E N E.

Wretched race!

O E D I P U S.

And art thou come, my daughter?

I S M E N E.

I have reach'd thee

With toil and labour,

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

Touch me, O! my child!

I S M E N E.

Let me embrace you both.

OE D I P U S.

Both miserable!

I S M E N E. [they all embrace.

Join then a third as wretched as yourselves;

OE D I P U S.

Ifmene, wherefore art thou come?

I S M E N E.

My care

For thee, my father, brought me here.

OE D I P U S.

For me?

I S M E N E.

That I might speak to thee; this faithful slave

Alone conducted me.

[pointing to her attendant.

OE D I P U S.

Thy brothers, say,

What are they doing?

I S M E N E.

They are—what they are;

For, O! between them deadliest discord reigns.

OE D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

How like th' unmanly fons of Ægypt's clime,
 Where the men sit inglorious at the loom,
 And to their wives leave each domestic care!
 Ev'n thus my fons, who shou'd have labour'd for me,
 Like women idly sit at home, whilst you
 Perform their office, and with filial care
 Attend a wretched father; this kind maid, [point. to Antig.
 Ev'n from her infant days, hath wander'd long
 An exile with me, and supported still
 My feeble age; oft thro' the savage woods,
 Naked and hungry, by the wint'ry storms
 Or scorching heats afflicted, led me on,
 And gave me food, unmindful of her own.
 Thou too, Ismene, wert my faithful guard,
 When I was driven forth; and now art come
 To tell thy father what the gods declare:
 A stranger now to Thebes, I know not what
 Hath pass'd between them; thou hast some sad news
 I know thou hast, to tell thy wretched father.

I S M E N E.

What I have suffer'd in the search of thee,
 I pass in silence o'er, since to repeat,
 Were but, alas! to double my misfortunes;

I only came to tell thee the sad fate
 Of thy unhappy sons; a while they seem'd
 As if they meant to yield the throne to Creon,
 Nor stain their guilty hands with Theban blood,
 Mindful of that pollution which remain'd
 On thy devoted race; but now some god
 Or their own wicked minds have rais'd a flame
 Of dire contention, which shall gain the pow'r
 Supreme, and reign in Thebes: Eteocles
 Hath drove his elder Polynices forth;
 Who, now an exile, seeks (as fame reports)
 The Argians, and in solemn contract join'd
 With these his new allies wou'd raise their fame
 Above the stars, and sink our Thebes in ruin.
 These are not words alone, 'tis now in act,
 Alas! ev'n now I fear, nor know I when
 The gods will take compassion on thy woes.

O E D I P U S.

Hast thou no hope they'll pity me?

I S M E N E.

I have;

Their oracles have said it.

O E D I P U S.

Ha! said what,

My daughter, tell me, what have they declar'd?

I S M E N E.

The time wou'd come, they said, when Thebes once more
Must seek thee, dead or living, for her safety.

OE D I P U S.

Why, what cou'd such a wretch as I do for them?

I S M E N E.

Their only hope, they say, is plac'd in thee,

OE D I P U S.

I, that am nothing, grown so pow'rful! whence
Can it proceed?

I S M E N E.

The gods, who once depress'd thee,
Now raise thee up again.

OE D I P U S.

It cannot be;

Who falls in youth will never rise in age.

I S M E N E.

Know, for this very purpose Creon comes;
E'er long thou may'st expect him.

OE D I P U S.

What to do,

My daughter?

I S M E N E.

I S M E N E.

To remove thee hence, and place thee
Nearer to Thebes, but not within her borders.

O E D I P U S.

If not within, what profit can it be
To them?

I S M E N E.

Thy tomb, rais'd in a foreign land,
They fear wou'd prove most fatal.

O E D I P U S.

But how know they
It must be so, unless some god declar'd it?

I S M E N E.

For this alone they wish to have thee near
The borders, in their power, and not thy own.

O E D I P U S.

To bury me at Thebes?

I S M E N E.

That cannot be;

Thy crime forbids it.

O E D I P U S.

Then I'll never go.

I S M E N E.

A time will come when they shall feel thy vengeance.

R r 2

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

What strange vicissitude can e'er produce
This wish'd event?

I S M E N E.

Thy wrath, when at thy tomb
They shall be forc'd to meet.

O E D I P U S.

Who told thee this?

Ismene, say.

I S M E N E.

The sacred ministers
Of Delphos.

O E D I P U S.

Came it from Apollo's shrine?

I S M E N E.

On their return to Thebes they did report it.

O E D I P U S.

My sons, did they hear aught of this?

I S M E N E.

Both heard,

And know it well.

O E D I P U S.

Yet, impious as they are,
Prefer'd a kingdom to their father's love.

I S M E N E.

I S M E N E.

With grief I tell thee what with grief I heard.

O E D I P U S.

O! may the gods doom them to endless strife;
 Ne'er may the battle cease, till OEdipus
 Himself shall end it; then, nor he who bears
 The sceptre now, shou'd long maintain the throne,
 Nor Polynices e'er to Thebes return;
 They shou'd not live, who drove a parent forth
 To misery and exile; left by those
 Who shou'd have lov'd, supported, and rever'd him;
 I know they say, the city but comply'd
 With my request, I ask'd for banishment;
 Not then I ask'd it: in my desp'rate mind
 When first I rag'd, I wish'd indeed for death;
 It had been grateful then, but no kind friend
 Wou'd minister the boon; at length my grief
 Gave way, and when they saw my troubled soul
 Had taken ample vengeance on itself,
 After long stay, the city drove me forth;
 And those who cou'd have fav'd me, my base sons,
 Deaf to a father's pray'rs, permit me still
 To roam abroad, in poverty and exile:
 From these alone, far as their tender sex

Can help me, I receive the means of life,
 All the sweet comfort, food, or needful rest,
 Earth can afford me now; whilst to my sons
 A throne was dearer than a father's love;
 But they shall never gain me for their friend,
 Ne'er reign in Thebes; these oracles declare
 They never shall; I do remember too
 Another prophecy, which Phœbus erst
 Deliver'd to me: let 'em send their Creon,
 Or any other pow'rful citizen,
 To drag me hence: my hospitable friends,
 If to those all-protecting deities
 Who here preside, you too will lend your aid,
 Athens shall find in me its best defence,
 And vengeance strike the foes of OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Thou and thy daughters well deserve our pity,
 And, for thy words are full of promis'd good
 To our lov'd city, I will tell thee all
 'Tis meet thou shou'dst perform.

O E D I P U S.

My best of friends,
 Instruct me; I am ready to obey.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

An expiation instant must thou make
To the offended pow'rs, whose sacred feat
Thou hast profan'd.

O E D I P U S.

But, how must it be done?

C H O R U S.

First, with pure hands, from th' ever-flowing spring,
Thy due libations pour.

O E D I P U S.

What follows then?

C H O R U S.

Take thou a cup, wrought by some skilful hand,
Bind it with wreaths around.

O E D I P U S.

Of leaves or threads

Compos'd?

C H O R U S.

An expiation, &c. The remains of the antient drama, exclusive of their intrinsic merit with regard to its more essential parts, are extremely valuable, merely for the insight which they occasionally give us into almost every religious ceremony practised in earlier ages. Nothing can be more precise or compleat than this account of an expiation: the cup, which is to be of a peculiar form, must be bound with wreaths of wool; that wool must be from a new-thorn lamb; the water drawn from three different fountains, mix'd with honey, and every drop pour'd out; olive boughs must be held in the hand, and the whole done in the deepest silence. However ridiculous or absurd these circumstances may appear to us, we need not doubt but on the Athenian stage they must have cast an air of great solemnity over this scene, and have been well received by a Grecian audience. Our own Sophocles has trod the same path with success; his witches and fairies sell in with the superstitions of his cotemporaries, and not only secured their attention, but the applause and admiration of their posterity.

C H O R U S.

Of wool, fresh from the new-shorn lamb.

O E D I P U S.

Is there aught else?

C H O R U S.

Then, turning to the sun,

Make thy libations.

O E D I P U S.

From the cup, thou say'st.

C H O R U S.

The water from three fountains drawn; and last
Remember, none be left.

O E D I P U S.

With that alone

Must it be fill'd?

C H O R U S.

Water with honey mix'd,

No wine; this pour on th' earth——

O E D I P U S.

What then remains?

C H O R U S.

Take in thy hand of olive-boughs thrice nine;

And

Olive boughs. These were some of the 'κλαδοι ικετηριοι,' or 'supplicating
'boughs,' mention'd in the first scene of the OEdipus Tyrannus: they were
generally

And off'ring these, begin thy humble pray'r.

OE D I P U S.

But how address them? that concerns me near.

C H O R U S.

Their name thou know'st implies benevolent;

Intreat them therefore kindly now to prove

Benevolent to thee: this by thyself,

Or by another for thee; but, remember,

Low be the voice, and short the supplication;

That done, return: be careful to perform it;

I may assist thee then with confidence,

But if thou dost it not, must tremble for thee.

OE D I P U S.

My daughters, heard you this?

A N T I G O N E.

We did; command

What's to be done.

V O L. II.

S f

OE D I P U S.

generally laurel or olive.

Vittatæ laurus, & supplicis arbor olivæ. Statius.

The number nine was always accounted mysterious, for various reasons assign'd by the commentators.

Their name, &c. The furies were call'd *Eumenides*, 'Eumenides,' i. e. 'favourable or propitious', for many reasons given by the scholiasts, &c. none of which are very satisfactory: some say, by an antiphrasis (like *Lucus* a non *lucendo*) being the direct contrary; others give them this appellation because their true names were consider'd as unlucky, and not to be pronounced. They might after all, perhaps, be call'd 'Eumenides' in the strictest sense, as being favourable to those who had been injured, and the avengers of all impiety.

O E D I P U S.

What I can never do,
Pow'rless and blind as I am; one of you,
My daughters, must perform it.

A N T I G O N E.

One alone
May do the task of many, when the mind
Is active in it.

O E D I P U S.

Hence then, quick, away;
But do not leave me here alone; these limbs,
Without a guide, will never find their way.

I S M E N E.

Father, I go: but how to find the place
I know not.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, t'other side o'th' grove;
There, some inhabitant will soon inform thee,
If thou shou'dst want assistance, or instruction.

I S M E N E.

Mean time, Antigone, remain thou here,
And guard our father well: cares are not cares,
When we endure them for a parent's sake.

[Exit Ismene.

S C E N E

S C E N E VII.

OE D I P U S, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, albeit we know 'tis most ungrateful
To raise the sad remembrance of past woes,
Yet wou'd we gladly hear——

OE D I P U S.

What wou'dst thou know?

C H O R U S.

The cause of thy unhappy state.

OE D I P U S.

Alas!

By all the sacred hospitable rites,
I beg thee do not ask me to reveal it;
My crimes are horrible.

C H O R U S.

Already fame

Hath spread them wide, and still talks loudly of them;
Tell us the truth.

OE D I P U S.

Alas!

C H O R U S.

Let me beseech thee!

S f 2

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S .

O! me!

C H O R U S .

Comply: ask what thou wilt of me,
And thou shalt have it.

O E D I P U S .

I have suffer'd much;

The gods can witness 'twas against my will;
I knew not of it.

C H O R U S .

Knew not what?

O E D I P U S .

The city,

Unknowing too, bound me in horrid nuptials.

C H O R U S .

And didst thou then pollute, as fame reports,
Thy mother's bed?

O E D I P U S .

O! death to hear! I did:

Here, here they are.

C H O R U S .

Who's there?

O E D I P U S .

My crimes! my daughters!

C H O R U S .

C H O R U S.

Daughters and sisters of their father? Oh!
'Tis horrible indeed.

O E D I P U S.

'Tis woe on woe.

C H O R U S.

Great Jove! both daughters of one hapless mother!
What hast thou suffer'd?

O E D I P U S.

Ills not to be borne!

C H O R U S.

Didst thou then perpetrate the horrid deed?

O E D I P U S.

O! no!

C H O R U S.

Not do it?

O E D I P U S.

I receiv'd from Thebes

A fatal gift; wou'd I had never ta'en it!

C H O R U S.

And art thou not a murth'rer too?

O E D I P U S.

A fatal gift. Meaning the throne of Thebes, with Jocasta whom he married.

OE D I P U S.

What's that?

Thou say'st?

C H O R U S.

Thy father—

OE D I P U S.

Thou add'st grief to grief.

C H O R U S.

Did'st thou not murder him?

OE D I P U S.

I did: but hear—

C H O R U S.

Hear what?

OE D I P U S.

The cause.

C H O R U S.

What cause?

OE D I P U S.

I'll tell thee; know then,

I murder'd others too, yet by the laws

I stand absolv'd; 'twas done in ignorance.

C H O R U S. [seeing Theseus, who enters.

But, lo! the king, Ægean Theseus, comes;

The fame of thee hath brought him here already.

S C E N E

S C E N E VIII.

THESEUS, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, CHORUS.

T H E S E U S.

O! son of Laius, long e're this, the tale
 Of thy disastrous fate, by many a tongue
 Related, I had heard; thy eyes torn forth
 By thy own desp'rate hand, and now I see
 It was too true: thy garb and dreadful aspect
 Speak who thou art: unhappy OEdipus,
 I come to ask, in pity to thy woes,
 What's thy request to Athens or to me;
 Thine, or this hapless virgin on thy steps
 Attendant; speak; for large must be the boon
 I wou'd refuse thee; I have known too well,
 Myself a wretched wanderer, the woes
 Of cruel exile, not to pity thine;
 Of toils and dangers, in a foreign land,
 Much have I suffer'd, therefore not to me

Shall

Much have I suffer'd. This is almost literally translated by Virgil, in his speech of Dido to Æneas,

Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores

Jaçtatum, hac demum voluit consistere terra.

Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.

Nothing can be more amiable than the character of Theseus; he receives, pities, and comforts the unfortunate exile; in return for his generosity, OEdipus gives him the most solemn assurances of future happiness, with certain success and victory to the whole state of Athens.

Shall the poor stranger ever sue in vain
 For aid and safety : mortals as we are,
 Uncertain ever is to-morrow's fate,
 Alike unknown to Theseus and to thee.

O E D I P U S.

Theseus, thy words declare thy noble nature,
 And leave me little to reply : thou know'st
 My story, who, and whence I am ; no more
 Remains, but that I tell thee my request,
 And we have done.

T H E S E U S.

Proceed then, and inform me.

O E D I P U S.

I come to give this wretched body to thee,
 To fight ungracious, but of worth more dear
 To thee, than fairest forms cou'd boast.

T H E S E U S.

What worth ?

O E D I P U S.

Hereafter thou shalt know, not now.

T H E S E U S.

But when

Shall we receive it ?

O E D I P U S.

When I am no more ;

When

When thou shalt bury me.

T H E S E U S.

Death is, it seems,

Thy chief concern, and life not worth thy care.

O E D I P U S.

That will procure me all the means of life.

T H E S E U S.

And is this all thou ask'st, this little boon?

O E D I P U S.

Not little is the strife which shall ensue.

T H E S E U S.

What strife? with whom? thy children, or my own?

O E D I P U S.

Mine, Theseus; they wou'd have me back to Thebes.

T H E S E U S.

And wou'dst thou rather be an exile here?

O E D I P U S.

Once they refus'd me.

T H E S E U S.

Anger suits but ill

With low estate, and miseries like thine.

O E D I P U S.

Hear first, and then condemn me.

T H E S E U S.

Not unheard

All thou can'st urge, wou'd I reprove thee; speak.

OE D I P U S.

O! Theseus, I have borne the worst of ills.

T H E S E U S.

The curses on thy race?

OE D I P U S.

O! no! all Greece

Hath heard of them.

T H E S E U S.

What more than mortal woe

Afflicts thee then?

OE D I P U S.

Ev'n this: my cruel fons

Have driv'n me from my country; never more

Must Thebes receive a parricide.

T H E S E U S.

Why then

Recall thee now, if thou must ne'er return?

OE D I P U S.

Comanded by an oracle divine.

T H E S E U S.

Why, what doth it declare?

OE D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

That Thebes shall yield
To thee, and to thy arms.

T H E S E U S.

But whence shou'd spring
Such dire contention?

O E D I P U S.

Dearest son of Ægeus,
From age and death exempt, the gods alone
Immortal and unchangeable remain,
Whilst all things else fall by the hand of time,
The universal conqu'ror: earth laments
Her fertile pow'rs exhausted; human strength
Is wither'd soon; ev'n faith and truth decay,

T t 2

And

That Thebes shall yield &c. Those, who are acquainted with the Grecian history, and the many battles fought between the Thebans and Athenians, will easily perceive the design of Sophocles in this agreeable flattery of his countrymen. The abbé Sallier has gone so far as to make the whole of this tragedy political, and alluding throughout to the circumstances of the times in which it was written. He fixes the date of it to a particular period of the Peloponnesian war, and endeavours to explain several passages in favour of his opinion; but I refer my readers to his ingenious dissertation, which they will find in the sixth vol. of the *histoire de l'Academie des inscriptions*, &c. p. 385.

From age and death &c. This just and beautiful sentiment is, with great propriety, put into the mouth of OEdipus, whose age and misfortunes would naturally incline him to moral reflections, in which the OEdipus Coloneus seems peculiarly to abound, and which render this play, perhaps not the most interesting in its circumstances, at least more instructive and agreeable than any of the rest.

And from their ashes fraud and falshood rise ;
 Nor friendship long from man to man endures,
 Or realm to realm ; to each, successive rise
 Bitter and sweet, and happiness and woe.
 Athens and Thebes thou see'st united now,
 And all is well ; but, passing time shall bring
 The fatal day (and flight will be the cause)
 That soon shall change the bonds of amity
 And holy faith, for feuds and deadliest hate ;
 Then bury'd long in earth, shall this cold corse
 Drink their warm blood, which from the mutual wound
 Frequent shall flow ; it must be as I tell thee,
 If Jove be Jove, and great Apollo true.
 But why shou'd I reveal the fix'd decree
 Of all-deciding heav'n ? Permit me now
 To end where I began ; thy plighted faith
 Once more confirm, and never shalt thou say
 The wretched OEdipus to Theseus came
 An useless and unprofitable guest,
 If the immortal gods have not deceiv'd me.

C H O R U S.

O ! king, already hath this man declar'd
 The same good will to thee and to our country.

THESEUS.

T H E S E U S.

Can I reject benevolence and love
 Like this, my friends? O! no! the common rites
 Of hospitality, this altar here,
 The witness of our mutual vows, forbid it;
 He comes a suppliant to these goddesses,
 And pays no little tribute both to me
 And to my kingdom; he shall find a seat
 Within my realms, for I revere his virtues:
 If here it pleaseth him to stay, remember [to the chorus.
 'Tis my command you guard this stranger well.
 If thou woud'st rather go with me, thou may'st;
 I leave it to thy choice. [to OEdipus.

O E D I P U S.

Reward them, Jove.

T H E S E U S.

What say'st thou, wilt thou follow me?

O E D I P U S.

I wou'd,

If it were lawful, but it must be here—

This is the place——

T H E S E U S.

For what? I'll not deny thee—

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

Where I must conquer those, who banish'd me.

T H E S E U S.

That wou'd be glory and renown to this
Thy place of refuge.

OE D I P U S.

If I may depend

On thy fair promise.

T H E S E U S.

Fear not, I shall ne'er

Betray my friend.

OE D I P U S.

I will not bind thee to it
By oath, like those, whom we suspect of ill.

T H E S E U S.

Thou need'st not, OEdipus, my word's my oath.

OE D I P U S.

How must I act then?

T H E S E U S.

Fear'st thou aught?

OE D I P U S.

I do:

A force will come against me.

T H E S E U S. [pointing to the chorus.

Here's thy guard;

These

These shall protect thee.

O E D I P U S.

If thou goest, remember

And save me, Theseus.

T H E S E U S.

Teach not me my duty.

O E D I P U S.

Still am I fearful.

T H E S E U S.

Theseus is not so.

O E D I P U S.

Know'ft thou not what they threaten'd?

T H E S E U S.

This I know,

No pow'r on earth shall wrest thee from this place.

Oft-times the angry soul will vent its wrath

In idle threats, with high and empty words,

Which ever, as the mind is to itself

Restor'd, are—nothing: they may boast their strength,

And say they'll tear thee from me; but, I tell thee,

The journey wou'd be long and tedious to them;

They will not hazard it, they dare not: therefore

Be comforted, for if by Phœbus sent

Thou hither cam'ft, thou'rt safe without my aid,

Ev'n

Ev'n if I leave thee safe; for know, the name
Of Theseus here sufficeth to protect thee. [Exit Theseus.

S C E N E IX.

O E D I P U S, A N T I G O N E, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Thou art come in happy time,
Stranger, to this blissful clime,
Long for swiftest steeds renown'd,
Fertil'ft of the regions round,
Where, beneath the ivy shade,
In the dew-besprinkled glade,
Many a love-lorn nightingale
Warbles sweet her plaintive tale,
Where the vine in clusters pours
Her sweets secur'd from wintry show'rs,
Nor scorching suns, nor raging storm
The beauties of the year deform.

A N T I S-

Thou art come &c. This is the first song or intermede of the chorus, who in most beautiful language (for so it is in the original) sing the praises of Attica; the extraordinary fertility of it's soil, knowledge of horsemanship, and skill in naval affairs. Sophocles has apparently taken this opportunity to celebrate the place of his birth, and at the same time pay a compliment to his countrymen: one may easily imagine with what applause it must have been received by an Athenian audience.

This chorus closes the act, which the reader may observe, is of a most enormous length, and unproportionable to the rest. Brumoy, to avoid the absurdity, begins the second act at the first entrance of Theseus, and calls this the second intermede, though he forgets to tell us which is the first.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

Where the sweet Narcissus growing,
 Where the yellow Crocus blowing
 Round the sacred altars twine,
 Off'ring to the pow'rs divine;
 Where the pure springs perpetual flow,
 Wat'ring the verdant meads below,
 Which with its earth-enriching waves
 The fair Cephissus ever laves.
 Where with his ever-sporting train,
 Bacchus wantons on the plain;
 Pleas'd with the muses still to rove
 And golden Venus, queen of love.

S T R O P H E II.

Alone within this happy land,
 Planted here by nature's hand,
 Which, nor Asia's fertile plains,
 Nor Pelop's spacious isle contains,
 Pallas, thy sacred olive grows;
 Striking terror on our foes,

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U 11

Ever

The sacred olive. These olives were call'd 'Mozzi,' or 'Moria,' for some reasons, not very material, assign'd by the commentators: it is sufficient to observe, that as the favourite trees of Minerva, the protectress of Athens, they were held sacred, and whoever cut them down was deem'd accursed; for which reason it is said, that when the Lacedæmonians invaded Attica, these alone were spared in the general devastation.

Ever free from hostile rage,
 From wanton youth, or greedy age ;
 Happy in sage Minerva's love,
 And guarded still by Morian Jove.

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

But nobler gifts, and fairer fame,
 Athens, yet adorn thy name ;
 Such wond'rous gifts hath pour'd on thee,
 Thy great protecting deity :
 Here first obedient to command,
 Form'd by Neptune's skilful hand ;
 The steed was taught to know the rein,
 And bear the chariot o'er the plain :
 Here first along the rapid tide,
 The stately vessels learn'd to ride ;
 And swifter down the current flow,
 Than Nereids cut the waves below.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T I.

A C T

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

ANTIGONE, OEDIPUS, CHORUS.

A N T I G O N E.

GREAT are thy praises, Attica, and now
The time is come to shew thou dost deserve them.

O E D I P U S.

What means my daughter? Speak; what new event
Alarms thee?

A N T I G O N E.

Creon, with a num'rous band
Of follow'rs, comes this way.

O E D I P U S.

O! now, my friends,
If ever, help me.

C H O R U S.

Fear not, we'll protect thee.
Though I am old, the strength of Attica
Is not decay'd.

S C E N E II.

CREON, with Attendants, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,
CHORUS.

CREON.

Most honour'd citizens,
I see you look with eyes of fear upon me,
Without a cause; for know, I came not here
Intending aught of violence or ill
Against a city, so renown'd in Greece
As yours hath ever been; I only came,
Commission'd by the state of Thebes, to fetch
This old man back, if by persuasion mild
I cou'd induce him to return; not sent
By one alone, but the united voice
Of a whole people, who assign'd the task
To me, because by blood united to him,
I felt for his misfortunes as my own.
Come therefore, OEdipus, attend me home,
Thebes calls thee back, thy kingdom now demands thee,
By me she calls thee; listen to thy friend,
For surely Creon were the worst of men,
If he cou'd look on woes like thine unmov'd;
When I behold thee in a foreign land
A wretched wand'rer, forc'd to beg thy bread

From

From place to place, with this unhappy maid,
 Whom little did I think to see expos'd
 To misery and shame, of nuptial rites
 Hopeless, and thus bereft of ev'ry aid:
 O! 'tis reproach and infamy to us
 And to our race; but 'tis already known,
 And cannot be conceal'd: O! OEdipus,
 I here beseech thee, by our country's gods
 Return to Thebes, bid thou a kind farewell,
 For she deserves it, to this noble city,
 But still remember thy own dearer country.

O E D I P U S.

Thou daring hypocrite, whose specious wiles
 Beneath fair semblance mean but to betray,
 Why wou'dst thou tempt me thus; why thus once more
 Ensnare me in thy toils, and make me still
 More wretched than I am? Long time oppress'd
 By heaviest woes, I pin'd within my palace,
 And long'd for exile, but you then refus'd
 To let me go, till fatiated with grief
 My soul at length was calm, and much I wish'd
 To spend my few remaining years at home;
 Then thou, for little did the kindred blood
 Thou talk'st of then avail, didst banish me;

And

And now again thou com'st to make me wretched.
Because thou see'st this kind benignant city
Embrace and cherish, thou wou'dst drag me hence,
With sweetest words cov'ring thy bitter mind,
Professing love to those who chuse it not:
He, who denies his charitable aid
To the poor beggar in his utmost need,
And if abundance comes, shou'd offer that
Which is not wanted, little merits thanks.
Such is thy bounty now, in word alone
And not in deed, the friend of OEdipus.
But I will tell them what thou art; thou can'st not
To take me hence, but leave me in the borders
Of Thebes, that so thy kingdom may escape
Th' impending ills which this avenging city
Shall pour upon it; but 'twill come to pass
As I foretold, my evil genius still
Shall haunt you, and my sons no more of Thebes
Inherit than shall serve them for a grave.
Thy country's fate is better known to me
Than to thyself, for my instruction comes
From surer guides, from Phœbus and from Jove.
Thy artful speech shall little serve thy purpose,
'Twill only hurt thy cause: therefore begone;

I'm not to be persuaded. Let me live
 In quiet here, for wretched as I am,
 'Twill be some comfort to be far from thee.

C R E O N.

Think'st thou I heed thy words? Who'll suffer most
 For this perverseness, thou or I?

O E D I P U S.

I trust

Thy little arts will nought avail with me,
 Or with my friends.

C R E O N.

Poor wretch! no time can cure
 Thy follies, thy old age is grown delirious.

O E D I P U S.

Thou hast a hateful tongue; but few, how just
 So'er they be, can always speak aright.

C R E O N.

But to say much, and to say well, are things
 Which differ widely.

O E D I P U S.

What thou say'st no doubt
 Is brief, and proper too.

C R E O N.

'Twill hardly seem fo

To those, who think like thee.

OE D I P U S.

Away, nor dare

Direct my steps, as if thou had'st the pow'r

To place me where thou wilt.

C R E O N.

Remember all

To witness this, for he shall answer it

When he is mine.

OE D I P U S.

But who shall force me hence

Against the will of these my friends?

C R E O N.

Their aid

Is vain; already I have done what much

Will hurt thee.

OE D I P U S.

Ha! what threats are these?

C R E O N.

Thy daughters

Must go with me; one is secur'd, and now

This moment will I wrest the other from thee.

OE D I P U S.

O! me!

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

I'll give thee much more cause for grief.

O E D I P U S.

Hast thou my daughter?

C R E O N.

Aye, and will have this.

O E D I P U S. [to the chorus.

What will you do, my friends? will you forsake me?

Will you not drive this vile abandon'd man

Forth from your city?

C H O R U S.

Stranger, hence, away;

Thy actions are most shameful and unjust.

C R E O N.

Slaves, do your office; bear her off by force,

If she consents not.

A N T I G O N E.

Whither shall I fly

For aid? what god or man shall I implore

To succour me?

C H O R U S.

Alas! what wou'dst thou do?

C R E O N.

I touch not him, but I must have my own.

A N T I G O N E.

O! princes, aid me now!

C H O R U S.

'Tis most unjust.

C R E O N.

I say 'tis just.

C H O R U S.

Then prove it.

C R E O N.

They are mine.

C H O R U S.

O citizens!

A N T I G O N E.

O! loose me! if you do not,
You shall repent this violence.

C R E O N.

Go on,

I will defend you.

O E D I P U S.

He, who injures me,

Offends the city.

C H O R U S.

Said I not before

It wou'd be thus?

C R E O N.

C R E O N. [to the chorus.

Let go the maid this instant.

C H O R U S.

Command where thou hast power.

C R E O N.

Let her go.

C H O R U S.

Begone thyself: what, ho! my countrymen,
The city is in danger; haste and save us.

A N T I G O N E.

[Creon's followers seize on Antigone.

I'm seiz'd, my friends, O! help!

O E D I P U S.

Where is my daughter?

A N T I G O N E.

Torn from thee.

O E D I P U S.

O! stretch forth thy hand.

A N T I G O N E.

I cannot.

C R E O N.

Away with her.

O E D I P U S.

O! wretched OEdipus!

X x 2

C R E O N.

C R E O N.

No longer shall these tender props support
 Thy feeble age; since thou art still resolv'd
 Against thyself, thy country, and thy friends,
 By whose command I come, remain perverse
 And obstinate, old man; but know, hereafter
 Time will convince thee thou hast ever been
 Thy own worst foe; thy fiery temper still
 Must make thee wretched.

C H O R U S.

Stranger, stir not hence.

C R E O N.

I charge you, touch me not.

C H O R U S.

Thou shalt not go,
 Till thou restor'st the virgins.

C R E O N.

I must have
 A nobler ransom from your city, these
 Shall not suffice.

C H O R U S.

No longer, &c. Meaning his daughters, Antigone and Ismene: the literal translation would be 'Thou shalt no longer walk, leaning on these sticks.' A little farther on, OEdipus calls Antigone 'Ψιλον ομμα' 'his only eye:' passages of this nature, the reader will easily perceive, must be soften'd a little in the translation.

C H O R U S.

What mean'st thou?

C R E O N.

He shall go,

This OEdipus.

C H O R U S.

Thy threats are terrible.

C R E O N.

I'll do't; and only he, who governs here,
Shall hinder me.

O E D I P U S.

O! insolence! thou wilt not,

Thou dar'st not force me.

C R E O N.

Hold thy peace.

O E D I P U S.

Not ev'n

The dreadful goddesses, who here preside,
Shou'd bind my tongue from heaviest curses on thee,
For thou hast rob'd me of the only light
These eyes cou'd boast; but may th' all-seeing sun
Behold and punish thee and all thy race,
And load thy age with miseries like mine.

C R E O N.

Inhabitants of Athens, hear you this?

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

They do, and see that but with fruitless words
 I can repay the inj'ries I receive ;
 For I am weak with age, and here alone.

C R E O N.

No longer will I curb my just resentment,
 But force thee hence.

OE D I P U S.

O! me!

C H O R U S.

What boldness, stranger
 Cou'd make thee hope to do a deed like this
 Unpunish'd ?

C R E O N.

'Tis resolv'd.

C H O R U S.

Our Athens then
 Is fall'n indeed, and is no more a city.

C R E O N.

In a just cause the weak may foil the mighty.

OE D I P U S.

Hear how he threatens——

C H O R U S.

For I am weak, &c. This line in the original is, I think, very absurdly put into the mouth of Creon ; I have taken the liberty to give it to OEdipus, from whom it certainly comes with more propriety.

C H O R U S.

What he'll ne'er perform.

C R E O N.

That Jove alone can tell.

C H O R U S.

Shall injuries

Like these be suffer'd?

C R E O N.

Call it injury

Thou may'st, 'tis such as thou perforce must bear.

C H O R U S.

This is too much: ye rulers of the land

My fellow-citizens, come forth, and save us.

S C E N E III.

THESEUS, CREON, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE,

C H O R U S.

T H E S E U S.

Whence is this clamour? wherefore am I call'd

From sacred rites at Neptune's altar paid,

Our guardian god? say, what's the cause that thus

In haste I'm summon'd hither?

O E D I P U S.

O! my friend,

For well I know thy voice, most cruelly

Have I been treated by this man.

T H E S E U S.

Who did it?

O E D I P U S.

This Creon, whom thou see'st hath ravish'd from me
My only help, my daughters.

T H E S E U S.

Ha! what say'st thou?

O E D I P U S.

'Tis as I tell thee.

T H E S E U S. [to his attendants.

Quick, dispatch my servants,

Fly to the altar, summon all my people,
Horsemen and foot; give o'er the sacrifice,
And instant to the double gate repair,
Lest with the virgins the base ravishers
Escape unpunish'd, and my guest thus injur'd
Laugh me to scorn for cowardice. Away.

Were I to punish this oppressor here [turning to Creon.
As my resentment bids, and he deserves,
He shou'd this instant fall beneath my rage;
But the same justice, he to others deals,
Himself shall meet from us; thou shalt not go
Till those, whom thou didst basely ravish hence,

Are brought before me: 'twas unlike thyself,
 Unworthy of thy country and thy race,
 To enter thus a cultivated city,
 Where law and justice reign, with violence
 And rapine, snatching what thy fancy pleas'd.
 Or didst thou think I rul'd a desert land,
 Or that my people were a race of slaves,
 And Theseus but the shadow of a king?
 Thebes never taught thee such destructive lessons,
 For she abhors injustice; when she hears
 That Creon, thus despising sacred laws,
 Hath ta'en with brutal violence my right,
 And wou'd have stol'n a wretched suppliant from me,
 She'll not approve thy conduct: say I went
 To Thebes, how just soever were the cause,
 I shou'd not seize on aught without the leave
 Of him who govern'd there; but, as becomes
 A stranger, bear myself unblam'd by all.
 Thou hast disgrac'd thy country, and thy friends,
 And weight of years hath ta'en thy senses from thee:
 Again I say, restore the virgins to me,
 Or stay with me thyself, for so thou shalt,
 Howe'er unwilling; what I've said, remember,
 Is what I have resolv'd, therefore determin'd.

C H O R U S. [to Creon.

Stranger, thy actions, noble as thou art,
 But ill become thy family and name,
 Because unjust; but thou behold'st thy fate.

C R E O N.

Theseus, it was not that I thought this city
 Without or guards to save, or laws to rule,
 Which brought me here, nor unadvis'd I came,
 But that I hop'd you never wou'd receive
 My kindred here against my will, nor e'er
 Embrace a vile incestuous parricide,
 Or cherish and protect him, in a land
 Whose court, renown'd for justice, suffers not
 Such poor abandon'd exiles to reside
 Within its borders; therefore did I this,
 Which yet I had not done, but for the curses
 Which he hath pour'd on me, and all my race;
 Revenge inspir'd me: anger, well thou know'st,
 Can never be extinguish'd but by death,
 Which closeth ev'ry wound: at present, Theseus,
 It must be as thou wilt; my want of pow'r,
 How just foe'er my cause, demands submission;
 Yet old and weak, I shall not tamely yield.

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

Audacious man! think'st thou the vile reproach,
Thou utter'st, falls on me, or on thyself?
Thou who upbraid'st me thus for all my woes,
Murther and incest, which against my will
I had committed; so it pleas'd the gods,
Offended at my race for former crimes,
But I am guiltless; canst thou name a fault
Deserving this? for tell me, was it mine,
When to my father Phœbus did declare
That he shou'd one day perish by the hand
Of his own child; was OEdipus to blame,
Who had no being then? if, born at length
To wretchedness, he met his fire unknown,
And slew him, that involuntary deed
Canst thou condemn? and for my fatal marriage,
Dost thou not blush to name it? was not she
Thy sister, she who bore me, ignorant
And guiltless woman! afterwards my wife,
And mother to my children? what she did,
She did unknowing; not like thee, who thus
Dost purposely upbraid us both; heav'n knows
Unwillingly I wedded her, and now
Unwillingly repeat the dreadful tale;

But, nor for that, nor for my murther'd father,
 Have I deserv'd thy bitter taunts; for tell me,
 Thy life attack'd, wou'dst thou have stay'd to ask
 Th' affassin if he were thy father? no,
 Self-love wou'd urge thee to revenge the insult:
 Thus was I drove to ill by th' angry gods;
 This, shou'd my father's soul revisit earth,
 Himself wou'd own, and pity OEdipus.
 Thy bold and impious tongue still utters all;
 Just or unjust thou pour'st thy foul reproach
 On me, pretending to revere the name
 Of Theseus and his country; but remember,
 The city, whom thou thus hast prais'd, is fam'd
 For piety, and rev'rence to the gods;
 Yet wou'dst thou drive a needy suppliant thence,
 And lead him captive; thou hast stol'n my daughter,
 But I implore the dreadful goddeffes
 To grant me aid, that thou may'st feel the pow'r
 Which thou contemn'st, and know the force of Athens:

C H O R U S.

[To Theseus.

O! king, this stranger merits thy regard,
 His woes are great, his cause shou'd be defended.

T H E S E U S.

No more, the ravishers are fled with speed,

Whilst

Whilst we, who suffer, stand inactive here.

C R E O N.

Speak thy commands, for I must yield to thee.

T H E S E U S.

Go thou before me, I shall follow close;
 If here thou hast conceal'd the virgins, now
 Discover them; if hence, to other's hands
 Committed, they are fled, they shall not scape,
 My servants soon will fetch them back; mean time
 Remember thy condition, for thy fate
 Hath caught thee in the net which thou hadst spread
 For others; but what evil means acquire
 Is seldom kept: thou can'st not naked here,
 Or unattended, thus to do an act
 Of violence; e'er long I'll know on what
 Thou did'st rely, nor by a single arm
 Shall Athens fall inglorious: hear'st thou this,
 Or are my words unheeded?

C R E O N.

'Tis not now

A time to answer; we shall know at home

What

What evil means &c. This maxim is adopted by Plautus, in his *Pænulus*, 'malé partum malé disperit.' We have likewise a proverb of our own, though it is rather a coarse one, expressive of the same sentiment, viz. 'What is got over the devil's back is spent under his belly.'

What must be done.

T H E S E U S.

Thou threat'nest; but go on.

Stay thou in quiet here, for if I live, [turning to OEdipus.

I will not rest till I restore thy daughters.

[Exeunt Theseus and Creon.

S C E N E IV.

OE D I P U S, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E I.

Now the combatants prepare,
And hasten to the field of war,
Theseus, their great and god-like friend,
The hapless virgins shall defend.

O! cou'd I hear the dreadful battle roar,

Or near Apollo's sacred shrine,

Or on the torch-enlighten'd shore,

Or

Now the combatants &c. This is the second song, or intermede of the chorus, who, imagining from what had pass'd in the preceding scene, that a battle must inevitably follow between Theseus and Creon, form various conjectures concerning the place, where it would be fought: relying on the strength and valour of their countrymen, to whom they presage certain victory. This gives time for the recovery of Antigone and Ismene, and prepares the audience for the events of the next act.

On the torch enlighten'd shore. Torches were carried in the Eleusinian rites, probably in memory of those, which Ceres and her attendants are supposed to have made use of in their search after Proserpine; these mysteries were perform'd by night in the most solemn manner by the Eumolpidæ, or priests of Ceres; none were admitted to them but the pure and unspotted, who were bound to inviolable secrecy.

Or, Ceres, where thy priests their rites divine
Perform, with lips in solemn silence seal'd,
And myst'ries ne'er by mortal tongue reveal'd.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

At yon snowy mountain's feet
Westward perchance the warriors meet;
Chariot and horse with mutual rage
On OËta's flow'ry plains engage;
Around their Theseus now, a valiant band,
See Athens' martial sons unite
To save their native land;
All shake their glitt'ring spears, and urge the fight;
All who thy pow'r, Equestrian Pallas, own,
Or bow to Neptune, Rhea's honour'd son.

S T R O P H E II.

The bloody scene shall soon be o'er,
Creon the virgin shall restore;
My foul prophetic fees the maid
For pious duty thus repaid;
For ever active is the pow'r of Jove,
From whom perpetual blessings flow:
O! that I now cou'd, like the dove,
Soar thro' the skies, and mark the field below,
The wish'd-for conquest joyful to behold,
And triumph in the vict'ry I foretold!

ANTISTROPHE I

Thou pow'r supreme, all pow'rs above,
All-seeing, all-performing Jove,
Grant that the rulers of this land
May soon subdue the hostile band!

Thee too, O! Pallas, hunter Phœbus, thee
Do we invoke, with thee be join'd
Thy virgin sister deity,
Who loves o'er lawns to chase the spotted hind;
On you we call, your aid propitious bring,
O! haste, protect our country and our king.

[Exeunt

End of A C T II.

A C T

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,
CHORUS.

C H O R U S.

I'M no false prophet, stranger, for behold
Thy daughters.

O E D I P U S.

Ha! what say'st thou, where, O! where?

A N T I G O N E.

My father, O! my father, what kind god
Rais'd up this friend who hath restor'd us to thee?

O E D I P U S.

Are then my daughters with me?

A N T I G O N E.

Theseus' arm

Hath brought us here: to him and to his friends
We owe our safety.

O E D I P U S.

O! come nigh, my children,

Let me embrace you; never did I think
Again to fold you in these arms.

A N T I G O N E.

We come

With joy, my father.

OE D I P U S.

O! where are you?

A N T I G O N E.

Here.

OE D I P U S.

My dearest children.

A N T I G O N E.

To our father still

May ev'ry pleasure come!

OE D I P U S.

[leaning on Antig.

My best support!

A N T I G O N E.

The wretched bear the wretched.

OE D I P U S.

[embracing them.

I have all

That's precious to me; were I now to dye,

Whilst you are here, I shou'd not be unhappy:

Support me, daughters, to your father's side

Close press'd; O! sooth to peace a wretched exile,

Long time deserted: tell me what hath happen'd,

But let the tale be short, as best becomes

Thy tender age.

A N T I-

A N T I G O N E. [pointing to Theseus.

Here is our great protector,
He will inform you; so shall what I speak
Be brief, as thou wou'dst have it.

O E D I P U S.

Noble Theseus,
My children thus beyond my hopes restor'd,
If I shou'd talk too long on such a theme,
Thou wilt not wonder; 'tis to thee alone
I owe my joys; thou didst protect and save
My much-lov'd daughters; may the gods repay
Thee and thy kingdom for this goodness to me!
Here only have I found or faith, or truth,
Or justice; you alone possess them all;
I will attest it, for I know it well;
I feel your virtues; what I have is all
From you. O! king, permit me but to touch
Thy hand; O! stretch it forth, or let me kiss
Thy honour'd lips! but O! what do I say!
Can such a wretch as OEdipus e'er hope
With guilty hands to touch a man like thee,
So pure, so spotless? yet I must embrace thee;
They only, who have known misfortune, feel
For other's griefs with sympathizing woe.

Hail! best of men, and may'st thou ever be,
As thou hast been, my guardian and my friend!

T H E S E U S.

Thus happy as thou must be in thy children,
Had'st thou said more, much more, and talk'd to them
Rather than me, it had not mov'd my wonder;
Nor think I shou'd resent it: not by words
Would Theseus be distinguish'd, but by deeds
Illustrious; this thou know'st, for what I swore
I have perform'd, restor'd thy daughters to thee,
Safe from the tyrant's threats: how past the conflict
Why shou'd I boast? they at their leisure best
May tell you all: mean-time to what I heard,
As hither coming, OEdipus, attend:
Of little import seem'd the circumstance,
And yet 'twas strange; but nought shou'd mortal man
Deem or beneath his notice or his care.

OE D I P U S.

What is it, son of Ægeus? O! inform me,
For nothing have I heard.

T H E S E U S.

A man, they say,
Who boasts himself by blood ally'd to thee,
At Neptune's altar, whilst I sacrific'd,

In humblest posture stood.

O E D I P U S.

What cou'd it mean?

Whence came he?

T H E S E U S.

That I know not; this alone
They told me, suppliant he requested much
To talk a while with thee.

O E D I P U S.

With me? 'tis strange,
And yet methinks important.

T H E S E U S.

He desir'd
But to converse with thee, and then depart.

O E D I P U S.

Who can it be?

T H E S E U S.

Haft thou no friend at Argos,
None of thy kindred there who wish'd to see thee?

O E D I P U S.

No more, my friend.

T H E S E U S.

What say'st thou?

O E D I P U S.

OE D I P U S.

Do not ask me.

T H E S E U S.

Ask what——

OE D I P U S.

I know him now; I know too well

Who's at the altar.

T H E S E U S.

Who is it?

OE D I P U S.

My son;

That hateful son, whose voice I loath to hear.

T H E S E U S.

But why not hear him? still thou may'st refuse

What he shall ask.

OE D I P U S.

I cannot, cannot bear it:

Do not oblige me.

T H E S E U S.

But the sacred place,

Where

I know him now. OEdipus is first at a loss to guess who this stranger could be that enquired after him, but on recollection concludes it was his son. 'Antigone & sa sœur (says Brumoy) devinent que c'est leur frere Polynice, & elles le disent à leur pere;' the French critic is here mistaken, for OEdipus is not told by his daughters, but imagines himself it must be Polynices, as soon as Theseus mentions his coming from Argos.

Where now he stands, and rev'ence to the gods,
Demand it of thee.

A N T I G O N E.

Let me, O! my father,

Young as I am, admonish thee! O! grant
Thy friend his just request, obey the gods,
And let our brother come; whate'er he says
It need not draw thee from thy first resolve.
What harm to hear him? words have oft produc'd
The noblest works: remember 'tis thy child,
Thou didst beget him; tho' he were the worst
Of sons to thee, yet wou'd it ill become
A father to return it: let him come.
Others like thee have base unworthy children,
And yet their minds are soften'd to forgiveness
By friend's advice, and all their wrath subdu'd.
Think on thy own unhappy parent's fate,
Thence may'st thou learn what dreadful ills have flow'd
From anger's bitter fountain; thou, alas!
Art a sad proof; those sightless eyes too well
Bear witness to it; those, who only ask
What justice warrants, shou'd not ask in vain,
Nor, who receives a benefit, forget
The hand that gave, but study to repay it.

O E D I P U S.

O E D I P U S.

You have o'ercome me : with reluctant pleasure
I yield ; my children, be it as you please :
But if he comes, O ! Theseus, guard my life.

T H E S E U S.

I've said enough ; no more : I will not boast,
But thou art safe if heav'n forsakes not me.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

In sacred wisdom's path is seldom seen

The wretch, whom sordid love of wealth inspires ;
Neglectful of the happy golden mean,

His soul nor truth nor heav'nly knowledge fires :
No length of days to him can pleasure bring,

In death alone he finds repose,

End of his wishes and his wocs ;

In that uncomfortable night

Where never music's charms delight,

Nor virgin choirs their hymenæals sing.

A N T I S-

With reluctant pleasure. The original is remarkably elegant ; ' Βαρεῖαν
' ἄνευ νικᾶτε με'. I have endeavour'd to render it as closely as possible.

In sacred wisdom's path &c. This is the third song, or intermede of the chorus, who, struck'd at the unparallel'd misfortunes of OEdipus, fall into some melancholy reflections on the miseries of old age, and the unhappy condition of human life, in every period of it ; this gives time and prepares the audience for the arrival of Polynices.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

The happiest fate of man is not to be;
 And next in bliss is he who soon as born,
 From the vain world and all its sorrows free,
 Shall whence he came with speediest foot return;
 For youth is full of folly, toils and woe,
 Of war, sedition, pain and strife,
 With all the busy ills of life,
 Till helpless age comes creeping on,
 Deserted, friendless and alone,
 Which neither pow'r nor joy nor pleasure knows.

E P O D E.

The hapless OEdipus, like me,
 Is doom'd to age and misery;
 Ev'n as around the northern shore
 The bleak winds howl, and tempests roar,
 Contending storms in terror meet,
 And dashing waves for ever beat;
 Thus is the wretched king with grief oppress'd,
 And woes on woes afflict his long-distemper'd breast.

[Exeunt.

End of A C T III.

A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

A N T I G O N E.

THIS way, my father, lo! the wretched man
Approaches, unattended and in tears.

O E D I P U S.

Who comes, my child?

A N T I G O N E.

Ev'n he I told thee of,

Poor Polynices.

S C E N E II.

POLYNICES, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,
C H O R U S.

P O L Y N I C E S.

O! my sisters, see

Of all mankind the most unhappy; where
Shall I begin? shall I lament my own,
Or shall I weep an aged parent's fate?

For

O! my sisters, &c. Nothing can be more artful, tender and pathetic than this speech of Polynices: conscious of his own guilt, and well acquainted with the fiery disposition of his father, he addresses himself first to his sisters, and then slides, as it were, insensibly into his modest and humble supplication, clothed in terms that must have moved any but the implacable OEdipus.

For O! tis horrible to find him thus
A wand'ring exile in a foreign land;
In this mean garb, with wild dishevell'd hair,
Bereft of fight, and destitute, perhaps,
Of needful food and nourishment; alas!
Too late I know it, worthless as I am,
I flew to succour him, to plead my cause,
That not from others he might hear the tale
Of my misfortunes; sacred pity fits
Fast by the throne of Jove, o'er all his works
Presiding gracious; O! let her inspire
Thy breast, my father; crimes already done,
Which cannot be recall'd, may still be heal'd
By kind forgiveness; why then art thou silent?
O! speak, my father, do not turn aside;
Wilt thou not answer? wilt thou let me go
Without one word; nor tell me whence thy wrath
Contemptuous springs? my sisters, you at least
Will try to move his unrelenting heart,
And loosen his clos'd lips, that not thus spurn'd
And thus unanswer'd, though a suppliant here
At Neptune's altar, I return with shame
And foul disgrace.

A N T I G O N E.

Say, wherefore didst thou come,

A a a 2

My

My hapless brother? tell thy mournful tale;
 Such is the pow'r of words, that whether sweet
 They move soft pity, or when bitter urge
 To violence and wrath, at least they ope
 'Th' unwilling lips, and make the silent speak.

P O L Y N I C E S.

'Tis well advis'd, and I will tell thee all.
 O! may that deity propitious smile,
 Whose altar late I left, whence Theseus rais'd
 This wretched suppliant, and in converse free
 Mix'd gracious with me; may I hope from you
 The like benevolence? and now, my father,
 I'll tell thee wherefore Polynices came.
 Thou see'st me banish'd from my native land,
 Unjustly banish'd for no other crime
 But that I strove to keep the throne of Thebes,
 By birthright mine, from him, who drove me thence,
 The young Eteocles: not his the claim
 By justice, nor to me his fame in arms
 Superior, but by soft persuasive arts
 He won the rebel city to his love.
 Thy curse, my father, was the cause of all,
 I know it was; for so the priests declar'd
 In oracles divine: to Argos then

I came, and to Adraftus' daughter join'd
 In marriage, gain'd the Argive chiefs, renown'd
 For martial deeds; sev'n valiant leaders march
 To Thebes, resolv'd to conquer or to dye.
 Therefore to thee, my father, came I here,
 To beg thy aid for me and these my friends,
 Companions of the war, who threaten Thebes
 With their united pow'rs, in order thus;
 The wise and brave Amphiarus, or skill'd
 To cast the spear, or with prophetic tongue
 Disclose the will of heav'n, with OEneus' son
 Ætolian Tydeus, and Eteocles
 At Argos born; to these Hippomedon
 Sent by Talaus his renowned sire,
 Bold Capaneus, who threatens soon to raise
 The walls of mighty Thebes; to close the train,
 Parthenopæan Arcas comes, the son
 Of Atalantis, from her virgin name
 So call'd: with these thy hapless son, (the child
 Of dire misfortune rather) leads his force
 From Argos to rebellious Thebes; for these,
 And for their children, for the lives of all,

Suppliant

The wise and brave, &c. In the original it is 'First Amphiarus, second Tydeus, third Eteocles, &c.' but this would have appear'd extremely harsh and aukward in a literal translation.

Suppliant to thee we come, in humble pray'r,
 To deprecate thy wrath against a wretch
 Who, injur'd much, but seek the vengeance due
 To a base brother, whose oppressive hand
 Hath drove me from my country and my throne;
 If there be truth in what the gods declare,
 On him shall vict'ry smile, for whom thy vows
 Shall rise propitious; therefore, by our gods,
 And native fountains, O! remit thy anger,
 And smile upon me, on a banish'd man,
 A beggar like thyself, who lives like thee
 By cther's bounty; in one common fate
 We are united, whilst the tyrant sits
 In ease at home, and laughs our woes to scorn.
 Yet if thou wou'dst but listen to my vows,
 Soon might I cast him forth, restore thee soon
 To thy dear native land, and seat myself
 In my own kingdom: thy assent, my father,
 Is all I ask; but, O! without thy aid,
 I have no hope of safety or revenge.

C H O R U S.

For Theseus' sake, O! give him answer now
 And let him go.

O E D I P U S.

But that the noble Theseus,
 Who hither brought him did request it of me,
 He ne'er had heard the voice of OEdipus;
 And little pleasure will it now bestow:
 Ungrateful wretch! who when the throne of Thebes,

[turning to Polynices.]

Where now thy brother sits, was thine, didst drive
 Thy father thence, to penury and woe:
 Now, when thou see'st me in this mean attire,
 Thou weep'st my fate, because 'tis like thy own;
 But I'll not weep, for I can bear it all,
 Still, wicked parricide, rememb'ring thee,
 The cruel cause of all; thou mad'st me thus
 On others bounty to rely for food
 And nourishment; for thee, I might have perish'd,
 But these my pious daughters, these alone,
 Beyond their sex's pow'r, with manly aid
 Have cherish'd and protected me: for you,
 Who call yourselves my sons, you are not mine,
 I know you not; though heav'n hath spar'd you long

It

But that the noble Theseus &c. The curse, which OEdipus here pronounces against his sons, hath something in it very awful and terrible; especially if we consider it as spoken before an audience thoroughly convinced that the curses of offended parents were always inflicted, and the prophecies of dying men always fulfill'd. Nothing perhaps but Shakspear's Lear can exceed it.

Death will o'ertake you, when thy forces come
To Thebes, which shall not fall before thy arms,
There soon shalt thou, and thy vile brother, die:
Long since my curses did declare thy fate,
Which here I do repeat, that you may learn
The rev'ence due to parents, and no more
Reproach a fightless father: look on these
My dutcous daughters, did they act like you?
They never did; and therefore to the throne,
Which you have forfeited, shall they succeed,
If justice still, as she is ever wont,
Sits at the hand of Jove: meantime, thou worst,
Thou most abandon'd of the race of men,
Be gone, away, and with thee bear this curse
Which here I do pronounce; to Argos ne'er
May'st thou return! never may Thebes be thine!
Soon may'st thou perish by a brother's hand,
Slaying the slayer! may dark Erebus
Receive them both! and now on you I call
Ye goddesses rever'd, and thou, O! Mars,
Thou, who hast rais'd the bitter strife between
My impious sons, bear witness to my words!
Farewel: now go, and tell the Thebans, tell
Thy faithful friends, how fair an heritage

Your

Your OEdipus hath here bequeath'd his children.

C H O R U S.

O! Polynices, little is the joy
Which we can give thee of this fatal journey;
Therefore away and leave us.

P O L Y N I C E S.

A sad path

These steps have trod indeed, of woe to me
And to my friends; was it for this, alas!
I came from Argos? I can never tell
My mournful story there, never return;
O! I must bury it in silence all.
My sisters, you have heard the dreadful curse
Which he pronounc'd; O! if it be fulfill'd,
And some kind hand restore you back to Thebes,
At least remember me; at least perform
The fun'ral rites, and hide me in the tomb;
So shall your names, for pious tendernefs
To an unhappy father long rever'd,
With added praises crown'd, exalted shine,
For this kind office to a brother's shade.

A N T I G O N E.

O! Polynices, let me beg thee, hear

V O L. II.

B b b

Thy

O! Polynices &c. Brumoy observes, that the more we consider this tender scene, between Polynices and his sister, the more natural, charming, and pathetic

Thy sister now.

P O L Y N I C E S.

My dear Antigone,

What say'st thou?

A N T I G O N E.

Lead thy armies back to Argos,
Nor thus destroy thy country and thyself.

P O L Y N I C E S.

It cannot be; my forces once dismiss'd
Through fear, what pow'r shall ever reunite them?

A N T I G O N E.

But wherefore all this rage? what canst thou hope
Of fame or profit by the fall of Thebes?

P O L Y N I C E S.

'Tis base to fly, and, eldest born as I am,
To be the laughter of a younger brother.

A N T I G O N E.

Dost thou not dread the oracles pronounc'd
Against you both, death by each other's hand?

P O L Y N I C E S.

I know the sentence; but we must go on.

A N T I-

thetic we shall find it; the fate of every thing that has intrinsic merit, says he, is to strike us but little at first view, to improve on the second, and always to appear the more beautiful, the more we examine it.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! and who shall dare to follow thee
After this dire prediction?

P O L Y N I C E S.

None shall know it.

The prudent gen'ral tells the good alone,
And keeps the threaten'd ill unknown to all.

A N T I G O N E.

Art thou determin'd then, and wilt thou go?

P O L Y N I C E S.

Do not dissuade me, for the task is mine;
And tho' a father's fatal curse attend me,
Tho' vengeful furies shall await my steps,
Yet I must go: may Jove indulgent smile
On you, my sisters, if when I am dead,
As soon I shall be, to my breathless corpse
You pay due honours: now farewell for ever,
For living you shall ne'er again behold me.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! my brother!

P O L Y N I C E S.

Do not weep for me.

A N T I G O N E.

Who wou'd not weep to see thee rushing thus
On certain death?

O E D I P U S

P O L Y N I C E S.

If I must dye, I must.

A N T I G O N E.

Yet be persuaded.

P O L Y N I C E S.

Ask me not to do

A deed unworthy of me.

A N T I G O N E.

Losing thee

I shall be most unhappy.

P O L Y N I C E S.

To the gods

Alone belongs the fate of mortals; some

Are born to happiness, and some to woe:

You may they guard from ev'ry ill, for sure

You merit all the good they can bestow.

[Exit Polynices.]

S C E N E III.

O E D I P U S, A N T I G O N E, I S M E N E, C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Fresh sorrows hath this hapless stranger brought

On

Fresh sorrows, &c. From this place to the arrival of Theseus, the chorus in the original, being in strophe and antistrophe, was probably set to music and sung; but as it is interrupted by the dialogue, the reasons for not throwing it into ode or rhyme in the translation are sufficiently obvious.

On me and all; but so hath heav'n decreed,
Which nothing doth in vain; whilst time beholds
And orders all, inflicting woe on woe:

But hark, the thunder roars: almighty Jove!

O E D I P U S.

My daughters, O! my daughters, who will bring
The noble Theseus here, that best of men?

A N T I G O N E.

Wherefore, my father, shou'd we call him hither?

O E D I P U S.

This winged light'ning from the arm of Jove
Must bear me to the shades below. Where's Theseus?
Let him be sent for instantly.

C H O R U S.

Again,

Another dreadful clap! it strikes my soul
With horror, and my hairs do stand an end
With fear; behold, again the lightnings flash;
I dread the consequence, for not in vain
These signs appear, of some calamity
Portentous ever: O! æthereal Jove!

O E D I P U S.

Alas! my children, nought can save me now,
The fatal hour of my departure hence

Draws nigh.

A N T I G O N E.

Why think'st thou so?

OE D I P U S.

I know it well.

Send for the king immediately.

C H O R U S.

Alas !

The thunder rolls on ev'ry side; good heav'n,
Protect us! if to this devoted land
It bodes destruction, let not ruin fall
On me; O! let not that be our reward
For pitying thus a poor deserted stranger:
O! Jove! on thee we call, protect and save us!

OE D I P U S.

Is Theseus come, shall he once more behold me,
Whilst yet I live, and keep my perfect mind?

C H O R U S.

What secret hast thou to reveal to him?

OE D I P U S.

I owe him much, and wou'd repay his goodness,
Ev'n as I promis'd him.

C H O R U S.

O! haste, my son;

At

At Neptune's altar leave the sacrifice,
 And hither fly, for OEdipus to thee
 And to thy country grateful waits to pay
 Thy bounties; haste, O! Theseus, to receive them.

S C E N E IV.

THESEUS, OEDIPUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,
 CHORUS.

T H E S E U S.

Again this noise, this wild astonishment,
 Amongst you all! was OEdipus the cause?
 Or did the bolt of Jove, and rushing hail
 Affright you? when the god in raging storms
 Descends thus dreadful, we have cause to fear.

O E D I P U S.

O! king, thou com'st in happy hour, some god
 Propitious led thee hither.

T H E S E U S.

Son of Laius,

What new event hath happen'd?

O E D I P U S.

Know, my life

At length is verging to its latest hour;
 I wish to dye, but first my vows to thee,
 And to this city, faithful must perform.

THESEUS.

T H E S E U S.

But who hath told thee thou so soon shalt dye?

O E D I P U S.

The gods themselves, who never utter falshood,
By signs infallible have warn'd me of it.

T H E S E U S.

How spake they to thee?

O E D I P U S.

In repeated thunder
And light'ning from th' all-pow'rful hand of Jove.

T H E S E U S.

I do believe thee, for thy prophecies
Were never false; but say, what must be done?

O E D I P U S.

O! son of Ægeus, I will tell thee all
The blifs reserved for thee in thy age,
For thee, and for thy country; I must go
To my appointed place, and there shall dye:
I go without a guide, nor must thou tell
To mortal ear where OEdipus doth lye,
For ever hid; O! king, that sacred place
Shall be thy sure defence, and better far
Than many a shield, or all the social aid
Of firm alliance in the field of war:

What

What more remains, unutterable now,
Of higher import, thither when thou com'st
To thee alone shall be deliver'd; nought
Shall I reveal, or to the citizens,
Or ev'n to these, beloved as they are,
My pious daughters; thou must ever keep
The solemn secret, only when thy life
Draws near its end, disclose it to thy son,
Heir of thy kingdom, and to him alone.
From king to king thus shall the tale devolve,
And thus thy Athens be for ever safe
From Theban force; even the best of cities,
Where justice rules, may swerve from virtue's laws
And be oppressive, but the gods, tho' late,
Will one day punish all who disobey
Their sacred mandates; therefore, son of Ægeus,
Be careful, and be just; but this to thee
I need not say: quick let us to the place,
For so the gods decree: there must I go,
Thence never to return: come then, my daughters,
Long have you been my pious guides, henceforth
I must be yours; follow, but touch me not;
Let me find out the tomb where I must hide
My poor remains; that way my journey lies;

[Pointing with his hand]

Away : thou god of shades, great Mercury,
 And Proserpine, infernal pow'rs, conduct me!
 O! fightless eyes, where are you? never more
 Shall these hands touch your unavailing orbs,
 O! light and life, farewell! at length I go
 To hide me in the tomb; but O! for thee,
 My best beloved friend, and this fair land,
 And these thy subjects, may prosperity
 Attend you still, and may you sometimes deign
 Amidst your bliss to think on OEdipus.

[Exeunt.

C H O R U S.

Goddeſs inviſible, on thee we call,
 If thee we may invoke, Proſerpina, and thee
 Great Pluto, king of ſhades, O! grant
 That not oppreſ'd by tort'ring pain
 Beneath the ſtroke of death he linger long,
 But ſwift with eaſy ſteps deſcend,
 To Styx's drear abode;
 For he hath led a life of toil and pain;
 May the juſt gods repay his undeſerved woe!

Ye

Goddeſs inviſible &c. This is the fourth ſong, or intermede of the chorus, who perceiving that the death of OEdipus is unavoidable, and every moment to be expected, put up their prayers to the infernal powers for his eaſy and peaceful departure; the original conſiſts, like the other choruſies, of ſtrophe and antiſtrophe: I have taken the liberty to throw the whole into one irregular ode, of varied meaſures without rhyme.

Ye goddesses rever'd, who dwell
Beneath the earth deep hid, and thou,
 Who barking from thy gloomy cave,
Unconquer'd Cerb'rus, guard'ft the ghosts below,
 On thee, O! son of Tartarus, we call,
For thou art ever wakeful, lead, O! lead
 To thy dark mansions this unhappy stranger.

[Excunt.]

End of A C T IV.

M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

M E S S E N G E R.

O! citizens, I come to tell a tale—
 But to be brief, know, OEdipus is dead.
 To speak the manner and strange circumstance
 Of his departure will require more words,
 And calls for your attention.

C H O R U S.

Is he gone?

Unhappy man!

M E S S E N G E R.

For ever hath he left
 The path of life.

C H O R U S.

How dy'd he? by the hand
 Of heav'n dismiss'd, without disease or pain?

O!

OEdipus is dead. The length of this description, and the number of circumstances recounted in it, seem to make it highly improbable that so many things could have happen'd in the short space of time allow'd for them, being only from the exit of OEdipus to the entrance of the messenger. There is no way of excusing Sophocles in this particular, but by supposing that the preceding ode of the chorus being set to music, might take up a long time in the performance; perhaps the impatience of the spectator to know the catastrophe may plead still more strongly in defence of this precipitation.

M E S S E N G E R.

O! 'twas a scene of wonder; how he left
 This place, and, self-conducted, led us on,
 Blind as he was, you all remember well.
 Soon as he came to where the craggy steep
 With brazen steps leads to the hollow gulph,
 Where various paths unite, a place renown'd
 For the fam'd league of Theseus and his friend,
 Between Acherdus and the Thracian rock,
 On a sepulchral stone he sat him down;
 Pull'd off the filthy weeds he long had wore,
 And bade his daughters instantly prepare
 The bath and splendid garb; with hasty steps
 To Ceres' neighb'ring altar they repair
 Obedient, bring the vessel, and the robe
 Funereal; all things done, as custom bids
 For dying men, sudden a dreadful clap
 Of thunder shook the ground; the virgins trembled,
 And clinging fearful round their father's knees
 Beat their sad breasts, and wept; soon as he heard
 The sound portentous, he embrac'd his daughters:
 Children, he cry'd, your father is no more;

No

O! 'twas a scene of wonder &c. The celebrated critic Longinus takes notice, in his treatise on the sublime, of this narration of OEdipus's death, as a proof of Sophocles's peculiar excellency in the descriptive.

No longer shall you lead a life of pain,
No longer toil for OEdipus; alas!
'Twas dreadful to you, but this day, my children,
Shall end your sorrows and my life together:
Never did father love his daughters more
Than I have lov'd, but henceforth you must live
Without your OEdipus; farewell for ever!
He spake, and long in sad embraces join'd,
'They wept aloud; at length did clam'rous grief
To silent sorrow yield, and all was still;
When suddenly we heard a voice that oft
Repeated, 'OEdipus, why this delay?
'Where art thou, OEdipus?' the wretched king,
Attentive to the call of heav'n, desir'd
That Theseus might be sent for; Theseus came:
When thus the dying exile; O! my friend,
Give me thy hand, my daughters give him yours,
Let this, my dearest Theseus, be the pledge
Of amity between you, promise here
That you will ne'er forsake my hapless children,
But henceforth cherish, comfort, and protect them:
The gen'rous king, in pity to their woes,
Vow'd to perform what OEdipus desir'd:
The father threw his feeble arms around

His weeping children, you, he cry'd, must learn
To bear your suff'rings with an equal mind,
And leave this place; for not to mortal eye
Is giv'n to see my future fate; away;
Theseus alone must stay, and know it all.
This did we hear him utter as we stood
Attentive; when his duteous daughters left him,
And went their way; we wept, and follow'd them;
Soon we return'd, but OEdipus was gone;
The king, alone remaining, as if struck
With terror at some dreadful spectacle,
Had with his hand o'er-veil'd his downcast eye;
A little after we beheld him bend
In humble adoration to the earth,
And then to heav'n prefer his ardent pray'r:
How the poor exile perish'd none can tell
But Theseus; nor the fiery blast of Jove
Destroy'd, nor sea o'erwhelm'd him, but from heav'n
Some messenger divine did snatch him hence,
Or pow'r infernal bade the pitying earth
Open her peaceful bosom to receive him;
Without a groan, disease, or pain he fell:
'Twas wondrous all; to those, who credit not
This strange report, I answer, 'tis most true.

C H O R U S.

C H O R U S.

Where are his daughters, with their weeping friends
Who follow'd them?

M E S S E N G E R.

They cannot be far off;
The voice of grief I hear proclaims them nigh.

S C E N E II.

A N T I G O N E, I S M E N E, with A T T E N D A N T S,
M E S S E N G E R, C H O R U S.

A N T I G O N E.

Alas! the time is come when we must weep
Our father's fate, the fate of all his race
Long since unhappy; various were the toils,
The labours we endur'd, but this is far,
Far above all, unutterable woe.

C H O R U S.

What is it?

A N T I G O N E.

O! it cannot be conceiv'd.

C H O R U S.

Is he then dead?

A N T I G O N E.

He is: his death was strange
And wonderful; for not in war he fell,

Nor

Nor did the sea o'erwhelm him, but the earth
 Hath hid him from us; deadly night hath clos'd
 Our eyes in sadness; whether o'er the seas
 We roam, or exiles in a foreign land
 Lead our sad days, we must be still unhappy:
 Alas! I only wish I might have dy'd
 With my poor father; wherefore shou'd I ask
 For longer life?

C H O R U S.

Ye good and pious daughters,
 Remember, what the will of heav'n decrees
 With patience we must bear; indulge not then
 Excess of grief; your fate hath not deserv'd it.

A N T I G O N E.

O! I was fond of misery with him;
 Ev'n what was most unlovely grew lov'd,
 When he was with me. O! my dearest father,
 Beneath the earth now in deep darkness hid,
 Worn as thou wert with age, to me thou still
 Wert dear, and shalt be ever.

C H O R U S.

Now his course

Is finish'd.

A N T I G O N E.

Ev'n as he wish'd he dy'd
 In a strange land, for such was his desire;
 A shady turf cover'd his lifeless limbs;
 Nor unlamented fell; for O! these eyes,
 My father, still shall weep for thee, nor time
 E'er blot thee from my memory.

I S M E N E.

Alas!

Alas! my sister, what must be our fate,
 Forlorn and helpless, of our father thus
 Bereft?

C H O R U S.

His end was happy, therefore cease
 Your fruitless tears: from sorrow none is free.

A N T I G O N E.

Let us be gone.

I S M E N E.

But where?

A N T I G O N E.

I wish——

I S M E N E.

O! what?

A N T I-

A N T I G O N E.

To see the tomb.

I S M E N E.

Whose tomb?

A N T I G O N E.

Our father's: oh!

I S M E N E.

But is it lawful? know'st thou that?

A N T I G O N E.

Why thus

Reprove me, my Ismene?

I S M E N E.

He is yet

Unbury'd, and without——

A N T I G O N E.

O! lead me there,

Then kill me if thou wilt; for where, alas!

Can I betake me?

C H O R U S.

Friends, be comforted.

A N T I G O N E.

Where shall I fly?

C H O R U S.

Thou hast already scap'd

D d d 2

Unnumber'd

Unnumber'd ills.

A N T I G O N E.

I'm thinking, my Ismene—

I S M E N E.

What think'st thou?

A N T I G O N E.

How we shall get home.

C H O R U S.

No more;

Thou hast been long familiar with affliction.

A N T I G O N E.

My life hath ever been a life of pain

And sorrow, but this far exceeds them all.

C H O R U S.

The storm beats hard upon you.

A N T I G O N E.

O! it doth,

C H O R U S.

I know it must.

A N T I G O N E.

O! whither shall we fly?

Great Jove! what hope remains?

C H O R U S.

Suppress your griefs;

We

We shou'd not weep for those who wish'd to dye,
 And meet their fate with pleasure; tis not just
 Nor lawful to lament them.

S C E N E III.

THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

A N T I G O N E.

Son of Ægeus,

Suppliant to thee we come.

T H E S E U S.

What wou'd you of me?

A N T I G O N E.

Permit us but to see our father's tomb.

T H E S E U S.

It is not lawful.

A N T I G O N E.

O! what say'st thou, king?

T H E S E U S.

Know, pious virgins, OEdipus himself
 Forbade that any shou'd approach his tomb;
 That sacred spot, which he possess'es there,
 No mortal must profane: to me, he said,
 If careful I perform'd his last command,
 Shou'd joy and safety come, with victory
 And peace to Athens; this your gods did hear,

Confirmed

Confirmed by the sacred oath of Jove.

A N T I G O N E.

If such our father's will, we must submit;
But O! permit us to revisit Thebes,
That so we may prevent th' impending fate
Of our dear brothers.

T H E S E U S.

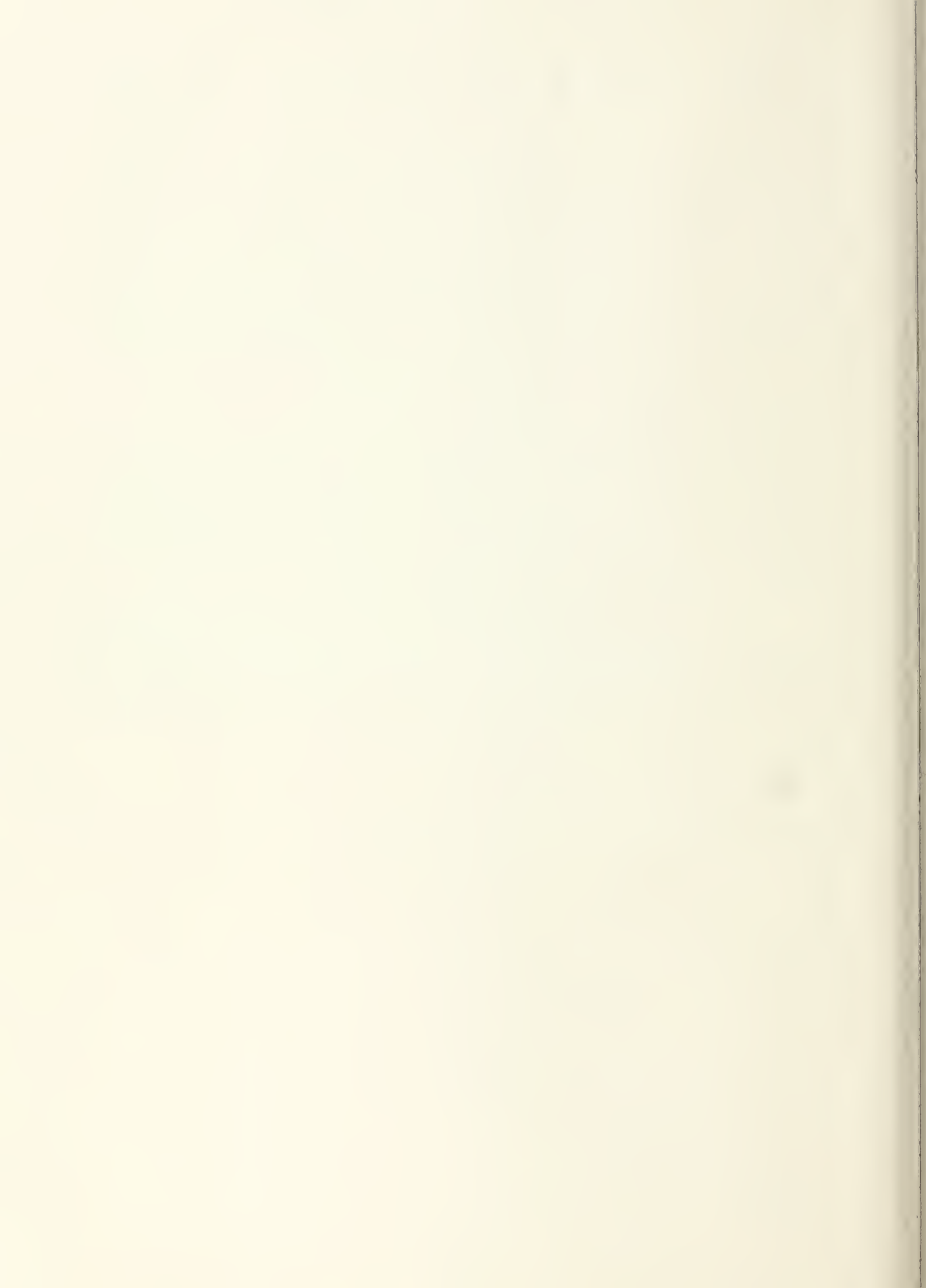
All that you request,
Or may be grateful to that honour'd shade,
Whose mem'ry we revere, I freely grant;
For I must not be weary of my task.

C H O R U S.

Remember, virgins, to repress your sorrows,
And cease your fruitless grief; for know, 'tis all
Decreed by fate, and all the work of heav'n.

F I N I S.





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